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TORTURE IN IRAQ

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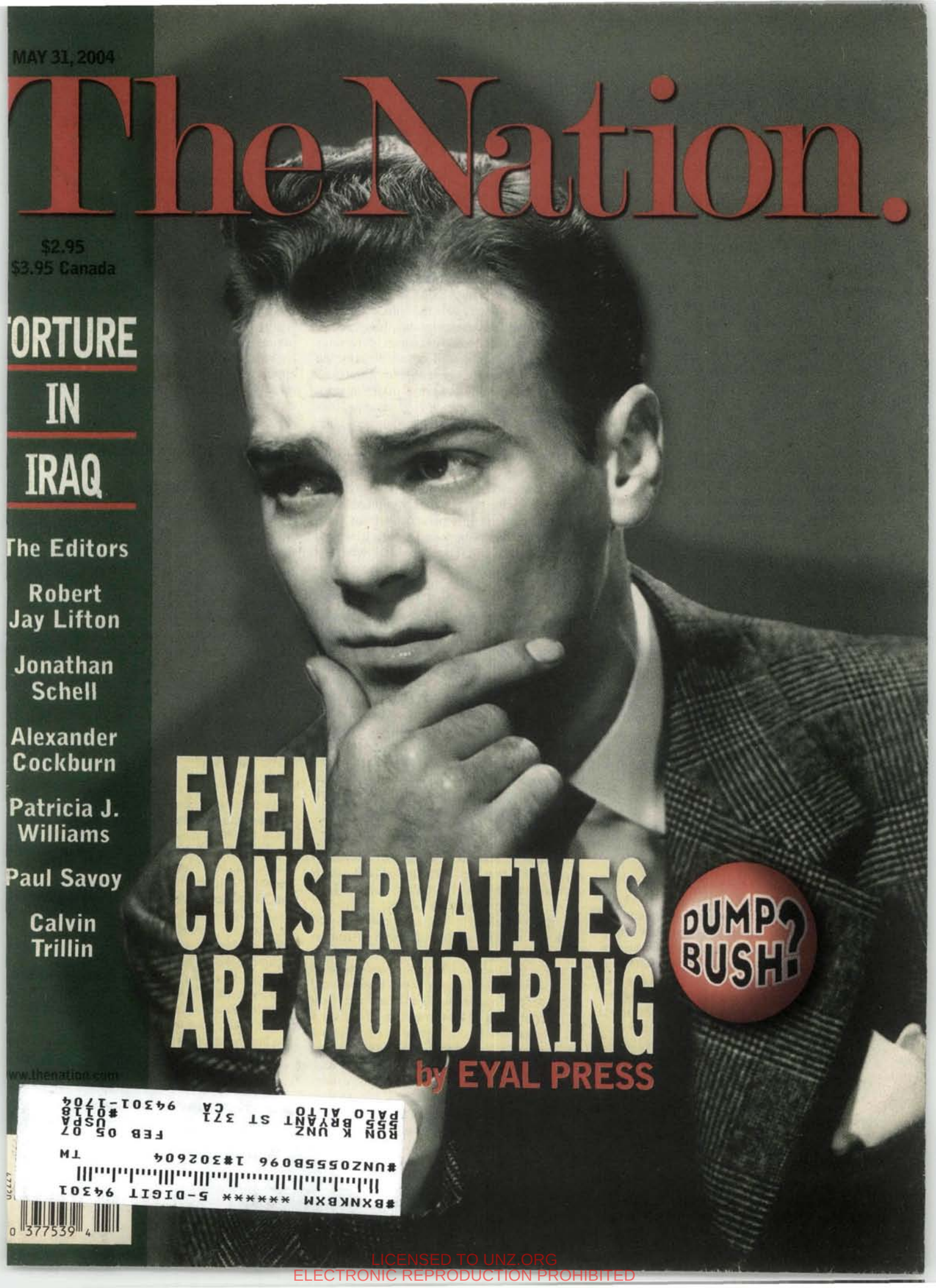
Alexander Cockburn

Patricia J. Williams

Paul Savoy

Calvin Trillin



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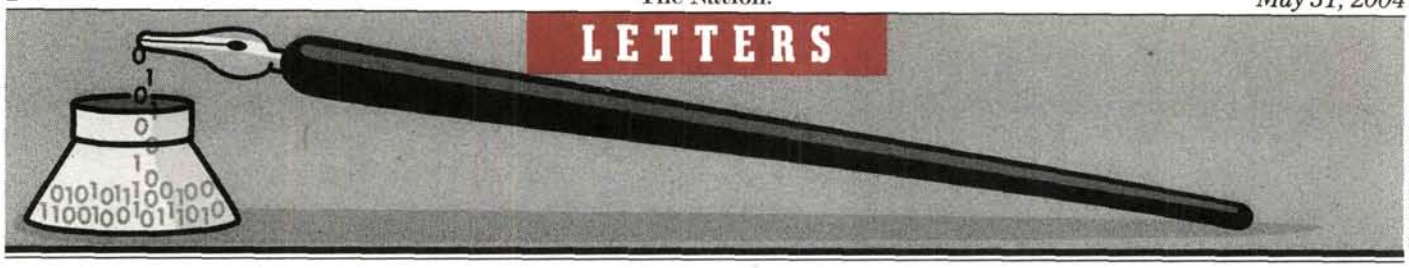

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

FRIST: DOING ASBESTOS HE CAN?

Paso Robles, Calif.

■ I applaud Paul Brodeur's May 3 "Educating Senator Frist," on asbestos litigation. My father worked for Johns-Manville and was diagnosed with mesothelioma in 1997 and died of this horrible disease one year later. He was 69. I witnessed his decline and it was not a pretty sight. Senator Frist should follow an asbestos victim from diagnosis to death; maybe he'd change his mind about letting the companies that are responsible off the hook. It's not about the money. I've lost out on some great quality time with my dad, for which I would trade any amount of money. So, please, Senator Frist, vote against your bill. I don't think Halliburton will be crumbling under the weight of its obligations to families across America. PAUL LOPEZ

DESTROYING THE HAMLET TO SAVE IT

Ottawa, Canada

■ William Greider's parallels in "Iraq as Vietnam" [May 3] are well drawn. One can add the aim of "democratization," about which Senator William Fulbright wrote in *The Arrogance of Power* in 1966: "I am reminded of the three Boy Scouts who reported to their scoutmaster that as their good deed for the day they had helped an old lady across the street. 'That's fine,' said the scoutmaster, 'but why did it take three of you?' 'Well,' they explained, 'she didn't want to go.'"

RANDAL MARLIN

BUMMER OF '68

Brunswick, Me.

■ Thanks for Jon Wiener's review of Dominic Sandbrook's book on Eugene McCarthy ["No Success Like Failure," May 3]. It should be remembered that Gene McCarthy paved the way for Bobby Kennedy's candidacy by showing how energized the antiwar movement was. McCarthy was the Howard Dean of 1968. Sadly, an assassin's bullet killed Bobby, and the Democrats gave us a prowar candidate in Hubert Humphrey. Humphrey proclaimed "the politics of happiness" during the week of our highest death toll in Vietnam. It is hard to underestimate the depth of disillusionment in the antiwar movement in the fall of 1968. A lot of us sat the election out and, yes, helped elect Nixon. That was not the fault of Gene McCarthy.

H.R. COURSEN

THE UNSUITABLE ARCHIVIST

Cambridge, England

■ In your May 3 editorial "The Haunted Archives," you mention that *The Haunted Wood* by Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev has been criticized for its flawed handling of KGB archival materials. Too true, not only because confirmation of their notes is impossible, as the source is now closed, but also because of the long and fragile chain linking the original material with what we read in the book. This chain involves multiple transcriptions, translations, retranslations, code transmissions, decodings and interpretations, as well as possible selection and control at the Russian end. Plus distortions arising from the Soviet agents' desire to amplify their data and enhance their standing. Plus the fact—which Weinstein has kept very quiet and which I only learned recently—that Weinstein doesn't know Russian; so a lot depended on Vassiliev, whose role in the book is not clear, but I suspect it was mainly linguistic. The result, to say the least, is highly unreliable.

I can confirm this personally from first-hand knowledge, with regard to their treatment of my late husband, Theodore Hall, who as a very young Los Alamos physicist gave information to the Soviets on the A-bomb project in 1944–45. On page 195 Weinstein states: "Ted Hall…was a member of the Young Communist League, and it was through the mother of a mutual friend in the League, Saville Sax…himself a party member, that Hall met Kurnakov." This is footnoted to one of the KGB documents, but it's not true. Ted Hall was never a member of the Young Communist League, Sax was never a party member and Sax's mother had nothing to do with the affair (in fact, they took pains to keep it secret from her). These falsehoods probably derive from a generous interpretation on the part of the New York agents, perhaps to reassure their superiors as to the reliability of the two young men.

Another example can be seen in the transcription of Kurnakov's (rather charming) report of his first meeting with Ted Hall, which includes the remark "His father is a mere [*sic*] furrier; his mother is dead…." That "*sic*," interpolated by Weinstein, is clearly meant to call attention to some sort of snobbery on Kurnakov's part. Maybe. But Kurnakov wrote his report in Russian, and there is no indication of what word he used. I know some Russian, and a trawl of dictionaries yields no exact equivalent of "mere." As in all translation, there is clearly an element of interpretation here. Without knowing what Kurnakov wrote in Russian, and what the possible social resonances of his Russian words were, we can't make a reliable judgment on that matter. A small thing, but it shows the pitfalls of such sources and emphasizes again the impossibility of certainty without full scholarly access. And it shows how little Weinstein knew or cared about such problems.

Weinstein also maintains—and the Russians can't be blamed for this—that Ted Hall later had a "teaching career," which is untrue. The same is true of the claim that Ted came from an affluent family. Not true: His father's small business failed when Ted was very young, after which they lived in a small walkup in Washington Heights, with no money to spare. Again, small points, but they do show how little importance Weinstein, and other cold war intellectuals, attach to accuracy. Not that those who appointed Weinstein as archivist care. *Nation* readers will find my article about Ted Hall's motivations at www.historyhappens.net.

JOAN HALL

A WALK ON THE GREIDER SIDE

Kansas City, Mo.

■ Bill Greider is right, of course and as usual: Kerry must get his game together ["Kerry's Crucible," April 26]. But Kerry's recycled (from the Clinton playbook) taxation and other economic policy proposals are limp biscuits for reasons not mentioned in Greider's article: the high proportion of corporations that pay no taxes at all; the impenetrable maze of the Tax Code, concealing endless special-interest loopholes and exemptions that crimp taxable income for those who do pay some tax; and the (estimated) $14 billion in uncollected personal and other taxes, uncollected because there is not enough IRS staff to do even modest samplings of returns, and because of an apparent disinclination to subject high-income taxpayers to audits, where substantial returns could be realized if audits were done. CHARLTON PRICE

Providence, RI.

■ After reading Greider on Kerry and watching the candidate fumble, dodge and then head down the field the wrong way on Iraq, I am dusting off my Ralph Nader buttons—in hopes Kerry will find himself yet. My memory goes back to 1984, when I was a (very) minor cog in the Mondale Machine. Walter walked away from a fight with Reaganism, posturing tough on enemies abroad and tough on taxpayers (does anyone remember "Where's the Beef?") at home. We've seen the same over and over again; it worked for Clinton, thanks to Perot and incumbency. Maybe, though, Ralph can threaten Kerry enough to drag him into the peace (make that "Exit Strategy") camp. It's the best hope we have. PAUL BUHLE

THE NEEDLE & THE DAMAGE DONE

Minneapolis

■ I commend Daniel Wolfe for his excellent article "Condemned to Death" [April 26], on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, exacerbated by the US-led drug war. There is a related but much less widely publicized epidemic—that of hepatitis-C, often found in conjunction with

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EDITORIALS

'Dead Man Walking'

"The unthinkable is becoming thinkable," neoconservative pundit Robert Kagan despaired recently in the *Washington Post*. What has Kagan worried is actually welcome: In the aftermath of Abu Ghraib, a national debate is emerging about withdrawing US forces from Iraq; even some of the war's firmest backers suggest it is now a lost cause. "We cannot prevail in this war as it is going today," conceded hawkish Democratic Representative John Murtha, while conservative columnist David Brooks claimed that he and other supporters of the war had been "blinded by idealism." As the *Post* reported on May 9, a growing number of US commanders share this pessimism, not because opponents like the Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr cannot be crushed militarily but because each American assault serves only to deepen Iraqis' resentment of the occupation. And then there are non-Iraqis like the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who is reportedly behind the grisly videotaped beheading of Nicholas Berg, the first of many promised acts of revenge for Abu Ghraib. "Dead Man Walking" is how one Pentagon consultant described the mood among US generals about the situation in Iraq. "It is doubtful we can go on much longer like this," said a senior commander. "The American people may not stand for it—and they should not."

The unthinkable has become thinkable because the unimaginable is today all too real. Every day, more horrific photographs and videos come to light—a naked detainee led on a dog leash, another naked man screaming in terror as attack dogs menace him—lending bitter irony to the claim that America's ultimate mission in Iraq is to export our values. (Ironic, too, is the fact that Berg was likely still in Iraq only because he'd been in detention, held for "suspicious activities," until the day after his family filed a suit charging that the US military was holding him without due process.) Every day, we read the names of more dead soldiers, their mission now tarnished not by "a few bad apples" who acted on their own but by an Administration that has brazenly dismissed international law and refuses to take responsibility for its actions, instead claiming that its critics are the ones who are out of line.

It is now clear that as early as January, Jakob Kellenberger, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, complained directly about the abuses to top US officials, including Secretary of State Colin Powell and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Starting last fall, Senator Patrick Leahy likewise wrote the CIA, FBI and Pentagon to demand clarification about interrogation methods, receiving in response "reassuring statements by officials in Washington that were repeatedly ignored in the field."

Even as George W. Bush was congratulating Defense Secretary Rumsfeld for "courageously leading our nation in the war against terror," an editorial in the *Army Times*, an independent weekly widely read in the military, demanded accountability from those at the top. "The entire [Abu Ghraib] affair is a failure of leadership from start to finish," the editorial declared. "Accountability here is essential—even if that means relieving top leaders from duty in a time of war." The words "failure of leadership" were also used by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, who investigated the abuses in Iraq, in his testimony before Congress.

John Kerry, presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, has echoed this, suggesting that responsibility "clearly goes beyond a corporal and a sergeant." But Kerry has yet to articulate the bolder critique voiced by some of his advisers. "We now have to admit that the American position is untenable," Kerry campaign adviser Richard Holbrooke told the *New York Times* in an article that indicated Holbrooke favors a handover to the United Nations and a phased withdrawal. With polls showing that half of Americans now think the Iraq war is a mistake, and with the Muslim and Arab world seething over Abu Ghraib, we hope Kerry summons the courage to call for a similarly bold change in course.

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COMMENT

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Conditions of Atrocity

Even before the Congressional hearings on the criminal abuse of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison, Colin Powell brought up My Lai, the Vietnamese village where, in 1968, American troops slaughtered more than 400 civilians, mostly old people, women and children. He cited it as the kind of thing that can happen in wars. I also thought of My Lai, but for somewhat different reasons.

Both Abu Ghraib and My Lai are examples of what I call an "atrocity-producing situation"—one so structured, psychologically and militarily, that ordinary people, men or women no better or worse than you or I, can regularly commit atrocities. In Vietnam that structure included "free-fire zones" (areas in which soldiers were encouraged to fire at virtually anyone); "body counts" (with a breakdown in the distinction between combatants and civilians, and competition among commanders for the best statistics); and the emotional state of US soldiers as they struggled with angry grief over buddies killed by invisible adversaries and with a desperate need to identify some "enemy."

The Iraq military environment is quite different from that of Vietnam, but there are some striking parallels. Iraq is also a counterinsurgency war in which US soldiers, despite their extraordinary firepower, feel extremely vulnerable in a hostile environment, and in which higher-ranking officers and war planners feel frustrated by the great difficulty of tracking down or even recognizing the enemy. The exaggerated focus on interrogation, including the humiliation of detainees as a "softening-up" process, reflects that frustration.

We can thus speak of a three-tier dynamic. Foot soldiers—in this case MPs and civilian contractors—do the dirty work, as either orchestrated or at least sanctioned by military intelligence officers in charge of interrogation procedures. The latter in turn act on pressure from higher-ups to extract information that will identify "insurgents" and possibly lead to hidden weapons.

What ultimately drives the dynamic is an ideological vision that equates Iraqi fighters with "terrorists" and seeks to further justify the invasion. All this is part of the amorphous, even apocalyptic, "war on terrorism," as is the practice of denying the human rights of detainees labeled as terrorists, a further stimulus for abuse. Grotesque improvisations can occur at different levels—whether in the form of interrogators' ideas about inflicting sexual humiliation or in foot soldiers' methods of carrying out those instructions or responding to more indirect messages from above.

Recognizing that atrocity is a group activity, one must ask how individual soldiers can so readily join in. I believe they undergo a type of dissociation I call "doubling"—the formation of a second self. Nazi doctors could continue to be ordinary husbands and fathers when on leave from their murderous work in Auschwitz. Similarly, Tony Soprano is a likable fellow who cares about his children but is in the business of maiming and killing. The individual psyche can adapt to an atrocity-producing environment by means of a subself that behaves as if autonomous and thereby joins in activities that would otherwise seem repugnant. Ironically and sadly, this is an expression of the same genius for adaptation that

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COMMENT

has so well served *Homo sapiens* in the evolutionary process.

In environments where sanctioned brutality becomes the norm, sadistic impulses, dormant in all of us, are likely to be expressed. The group's violent energy becomes such that an individual soldier who questions it could be turned upon. (A Vietnam veteran who had been at My Lai told me he had felt himself in some danger when he not only refused to fire but pointedly lowered the barrel of his gun to the ground.) To resist such intense group pressure, an unusual combination of conscience and courage is required.

This kind of atrocity-producing situation can exist, with most of the characteristics I have described, in ordinary civilian prisons. And it surely occurs in some degree in all wars, including World War II, our last "good war." But a counterinsurgency war in a hostile setting, especially when driven by profound ideological distortions, is particularly prone to sustained atrocity—all the more so when it becomes an occupation.

To attribute the scandal at Abu Ghraib to "a few bad apples" or to "individual failures" is poor psychology and self-serving pseudomorality. To be sure, individual soldiers and civilians who participated in it are accountable for their behavior, even under such pressured conditions. But the greater responsibility lies with those who planned and executed the war on Iraq and the "war on terrorism" of which it is a part, and who created, in policy and attitude, the accompanying denial of rights of captives and suspects.

Psychologically and ethically, responsibility for the crimes at Abu Ghraib extends to the Defense Secretary, the Attorney General and the White House. Those crimes are a direct expression of the kind of war we are waging in Iraq. ROBERT JAY LIFTON

Robert Jay Lifton, a visiting professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is the author of The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide; Home From the War: Learning From Vietnam Veterans; *and, most recently,* Superpower Syndrome: America's Apocalyptic Confrontation With the World *(Nation Books).*

The View From Prague

Only on my last day in this hilly, river-spliced city, with such beguiling old world charm and art nouveau elegance that unless you're Kafka a strenuous effort is required to maintain fury or gloom, did I understand why Czechs who disagree with American foreign policy are in sympathy with some of its goals and can muster sadness but not Western European indignation over the war in Iraq.

It was a gray morning as I walked around the city beneath the spires, steeples, cupolas and turrets, walked through history, really, with intermittent rain and fog as conduits to the past. Prague is a lesson. My attention turned from the great kings and queens, courtiers and ladies-in-waiting decked in their finery, and from the suffering, patient peasantry that supported them for so long, to the sieges, wars, brutality, boiling in oil, quartering—the manifold violence that Prague has endured.

Czechs shake their heads, not their fists, at us. "You don't understand the progression," a 65-year-old teacher named Benes said to me. "Iraq had a monster in Saddam, and you removed him. Liberators. The trouble is, what then? We had our monster in Hitler. I remember the Russians entering Prague in '45. Liberators. I cheered their tanks. But liberators who stay become oppressors. The next time Russian tanks came, in '68, I did not cheer."

Far longer ago than the British, Czechs had their wars of conquest as well as internecine affairs when Catholics and Protestants slaughtered each other. But they have only a folk, not a familial, memory of all this. It is going on 700 years since Charles IV of Prague was King of Bohemia and later Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Tempers have cooled a bit.

The Czech Republic has a small contingent of troops in Iraq, but on the eve of the war all of them were told they could go home if they wished, and a dozen or so did. A poll taken at that time found only 12 percent of Czechs in favor of a war without the backing of the UN Security Council. The first Czech to die in Iraq, a petrochemical specialist, was killed in an accident this spring.

Along Golden Lane, a diminutive street named for its trade in precious metals, Franz Kafka lived and wrote for a while. Upstairs, the second floors of a number of these small houses—including Kafka's—have been connected to form a long, narrow corridor featuring a display of early Bohemian and Czech weaponry. I stopped after counting 200 variations of swords, spears, pikes, battle-axes, daggers, dirks, halberds and other devices used to kill in the name of faith and ideology, with simple greed always lurking in the background. Some of the rapiers had primitive pistols mounted on their hilts, as if a knight might ask someone he was about to finish off, "OK, which way do you want to go?"

I was shown some of Prague's sights by an educated young man named Slavek, who in the spirit of the times hopes to go either into the foreign ministry or the tourist business. Like other Czechs who have living memories of struggling under tyranny, Slavek genuinely sympathizes with a war to remove a dictator. "Absolutely, Saddam Hussein had to be overthrown, and the Iraqis couldn't do it by themselves," he said. "But the plans were bad. You went to war in too much haste and should have included Muslim countries. But if you pull out now the civil war to come will be much worse than life under Saddam. At least he had stability."

Leading me around the massive St. Vitus cathedral, Slavek pointed to a scene in the stained glass depicting a fratricide, to another where a noblewoman stabbed her daughter-in-law while she prayed, and then to another where a king was being killed by a pretender to the throne. "You can change a regime virtually overnight," he said, "but it can take ages to make a democracy. It took a long time for the West to evolve from the medieval days of torture—go look at an old torture chamber while you're here, but eat first. Afterward you won't have an appetite."

Slavek said most Czechs are easygoing about their beliefs. "It's lovely to have all these beautiful churches," he said, "but Czechs go to church only for hatching, matching and dispatching—the rest of the time they're agnostic. At some point there will be more churches than Christians." A wonderful country.

I took Slavek's advice and did not visit a Prague torture chamber until after lunch. Upstairs from Cafe Kafka and down the corridor from the swords in Golden Lane was a miniature Abu Ghraib. A small room offered eye-gougers, pliers for tearing off ears, a necklace of nails, an infernal machine for sawing people, racks for

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stretching those who dissented or even questioned, a spiked mace, an iron collar for garroting and other devices to make what Mel Gibson did to Christ seem like massage therapy. The Czech hero and martyr, St. Vitus, was boiled in oil and then, in case the suggestion needed underlining, drawn and quartered. Good King Wenceslaus himself, the patron saint of Bohemia, forgot to look out one day and was done in by his own brother.

At the other end of the corridor is a hands-on—i.e., virtual—highlight. Tourists shoot a crossbow at the mannequin of a knight in shabby armor with a target taped to its chest. The visor is drawn down so you can't see that no one is inside. There are no carnival prizes, only the thrill of a medieval method of killing. Three Americans, two men and a woman, were taking turns. How long before we have our own mock-up of GIs in Bradleys and Humvees battling "natives" with RPGs?

And yet. I was still in Prague, after all. A few steps down Golden Lane from the relics of violence was an exhibit of antique musical instruments. Czechs are proud of having lionized Mozart when he came to Prague and wrote the last part of *Don Giovanni*, playing to greater acclaim than he received in Salzburg or Vienna. A constellation of flutes, oboes, clarinets, horns, harps and accordions was on display, along with almost as many varieties of stringed instruments as there had been of swords upstairs. Prague is a museum of the beauty and the beast in all of us.

The city works its charms on most visitors. Even Serge, a Frenchman, went a little easy on the United States in the salutary envelope of Prague. "Leaving oil aside," he said, "the motive of helping Iraq be free was a sympathetic one, the installation of a democracy in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world. The beginning was something like the French *mission civilisatrice*, but it got messed up, just as we did in Indochina and eventually Algeria." Serge shrugged, ruffling a hand through his unruly brown hair. "The 'old Europe' you disdain learned not to fight colonial wars anymore. You can't win a colonial war, and that's what you're in."

The more noxious fumes from Washington do not reach Prague. It is a city whose existence is a judgment on us and, perhaps, a distant prophecy. The Czechs killed and burned and lanced and cut and tortured and boiled until it was just all out of them and they stopped. They live free of the constant hope we suffer from. Their capital city has become a disinterested aristocracy of tastes and values, with some longing for the leveling effects of Soviet socialism but none for its suppression of expression. Indeed, expressiveness is what blooms and thrives on the ancient stones of Prague. Catch it now. Soon it could be flattened into EU homogeneity. As for the citizens, they have less anger than pity for us. The pity is not for our being pinned down in a land we cannot understand but for the final act in our conversion to a warrior state. Czechs know. They've been there. PETER DAVIS

Peter Davis reported for The Nation *from Iraq and Vietnam in 2003.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Abuse of Prisoners in Iraq

We're told that the few rotten apples
Who brought on this sordid affair'll
Be punished. But what if those apples
Are right at the top of the barrel?

Straight, Not Narrow

Guilford, Vermont

In the early 1980s, soon after the right-wing grassroots movement gave us a Reagan presidency, I announced that I would be boycotting my straight friends' weddings. The response was what I had expected: derisive laughter. I tried to make my argument personal. I explained that since I couldn't legally marry the man I had been with for more than ten years (*The Nation*'s chief political writer at the time, Andrew Kopkind), they should, in solidarity, not participate in or benefit from a legal contract denied to us. It was plain discrimination.

At the time my boycott seemed to be failing. My straight friends continued to go to weddings and, worse, have some of their own. As the right wing grew in strength and numbers, I grew belligerent. These are progressive people, I thought; they should know better. I threatened to disrupt their weddings with brassy protest. That usually stopped the laughing.

As my position became clearer (and louder), my straight friends got more nervous. Some actually postponed their weddings. One close friend eloped, accompanied by a coffle of straight buddies, hiding the fact of his marriage from me. Straight people would tell me, "Well, we actually hate the idea of marriage, but we had to do it for the health insurance."

What my straight friends refused to understand was that my fight was also a fight against the right. I got tired of hearing straight progressives call the struggle for my civil rights "identity politics" when the truth was that their own identity as members of the heterosexual majority was being mustered and manipulated to drive American politics to the right. Willy-nilly, my progressive straight friends, silent beneficiaries of discrimination, were accomplices. Of course, straight people don't like to think of heterosexuality as an identity. But couldn't they see what was happening across the country? When Ronald Reagan held his arm aloft with the Rev. Jerry Falwell, Reagan, a divorced man, hadn't suddenly got religion; he was consolidating Republican power and making his handlers from GE a mint.

So my straight progressive married friends demonstrated against the *contras* while I did my "identity politics" with my gay and lesbian allies. The straight progressives could not see that the *contra* war was intimately linked to the culture war; that the culture war was what was drawing the foot soldiers whose votes and organizational zeal emboldened the right to do pretty much whatever it wanted anywhere in the world; and that so long as

(Continued on Page 21)

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Empire Without Law

On April 28 the subject of torture was discussed in oral arguments before the Supreme Court. The context was not the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers in the prison complex at Abu Ghraib. The photos of those events would not be released for another eight hours, by *60 Minutes II*. Rather, the context was the detention of two US citizens, Yaser Hamdi and José Padilla. The Bush Administration, in the person of Paul Clement, Deputy Solicitor General, was asserting the President's right to designate, at his sole discretion, US citizens as "enemy combatants" (a legal neologism), and then imprison them indefinitely without the right to see counsel or to have any other communication with the outside world. The lawyers for the defense were arguing that the President's claim destroyed one of the most ancient and fundamental rights of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, habeas corpus, which requires, in the words of the Magna Carta, of 1215, that "no free man shall be taken or imprisoned...except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land."

At one point, Justice John Paul Stevens asked Clement what assurances he could give that the citizens detained under his doctrine of unfettered executive discretion were not being tortured. Clement answered that the courts and the country must simply have confidence that the executive, in obedience to its treaty obligations, would never do such a thing. (He failed to note that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld had specifically exempted prisoners in Guantánamo from protection by the Geneva Conventions.) Clement opined that information given under torture was not reliable, and so "the judgment of the people who do this, as their responsibility, is that the way you get the best information from individuals is that you interrogate them, you try to develop a relationship of trust."

Asked by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg whether, in keeping with habeas corpus requirements, a citizen should not "have a right to bring before some tribunal himself, his own words, rather than have a government agent say what was told to him," Clement answered that in the Administration scheme the interrogation of the detainee was itself the opportunity.

That very evening, the issues raised in the abstract legal discussion before the Court sprang to shocking life in the pictures from Abu Ghraib, giving everyone a chance to judge just how much due process such interrogations supplied. It seemed unlikely that the naked, bound, hooded prisoners heaped in a pile were being given a good opportunity to prove their innocence, or that the naked prisoner facing snarling attack dogs, which soon were loosed upon him, was enjoying the protection of international treaties signed by the United States. Such were the revolting deeds to which the high-sounding doctrine led in practice.

But (someone might imagine) those prisoners were Iraqis; Americans would never do such things to other *Americans*. This proposition, too, had in a way been tested. Many of the guards at Abu Ghraib were chosen precisely because they had "worked as prison guards or corrections officials in their civilian jobs," in the words of the report on Abu Ghraib by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba. Two had been charged with abusing prisoners. Also, many of those swept up in the detentions in the United States after September 11 were abused, as a Justice Department report by the Inspector General has shown. The metastasizing offshore gulag (yet another form of "globalization") and the onshore one, with its 2 million inmates, are cross-fertilizing. It would be as deluded as it would be shameful to hope that when the executive branch unleashes its torturers, foreigners alone will be the victims.

What is happening concretely in the cellblocks is also happening at the level of developments in fundamental law. The pattern of corruption is a very old one, well-known to the Founders of this nation, who had carefully studied the example of Rome: A powerful republic gives birth to an empire, which in turn destroys the republic. The emperor who rules by force abroad develops a taste for ruling his own people in the same manner.

The Administration's across-the-board hostility to the constraints of law, domestic and international, is not accidental. The constitutional structure that is the backbone of the republic is a stumbling block to the empire. The republic requires a single standard, to which all are subject—the law. But the empire requires a double standard—one set of regulations for others, and another set, or none, for the imperial ruler. In the imperial conception, "law" is a set of rules dictated by the ruler for everyone else to obey. In this conception, other countries are not permitted weapons of mass destruction, but the United States may have them (and use them to stop the others from getting them). Other countries' troops must obey the Geneva Conventions, but the United States is exempt. Other countries must wage war only defensively; the United States may do so pre-emptively.

The imperial logic was on full display in the Supreme Court. In a brief on the Guantánamo detentions, eight former federal officials argued that "if no constitutional rights applied to offshore detainees, then the government would be free to create a parallel system of extraterritorial courts and extraterritorial prisons to punish extraterritorial crimes without legal oversight or constraint." Soon a portrait of just such a system appeared in the media. Indeed, just before the worst of the known abuses occurred, the commander of Guantánamo had traveled to Iraq to "Gitmo-ize" it (*Gitmo-ize* surely being one of the ugliest words ever coined).

Clement had asserted that the President's prerogatives to imprison foreign nationals without judicial review, foreign or domestic, flowed from Congress's authorization to the President to use "necessary and appropriate force" in Afghanistan. But Justice Stevens thought to inquire whether those powers would expire when the war was over. The answer was no. The President's power was "inherent." In peace as in war, the empire required its gulag.

The lesson to the world and to Americans was the same: We decide, you obey. This has been the message of the Bush Administration to citizens of the United States, just as it is the message of the prison guards at Abu Ghraib to those under their control. It is a message that almost all the peoples and governments of the world have bitterly rejected. Whether the American people will reject it also is something we'll find out on November 2.

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute.

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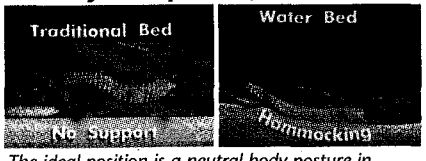

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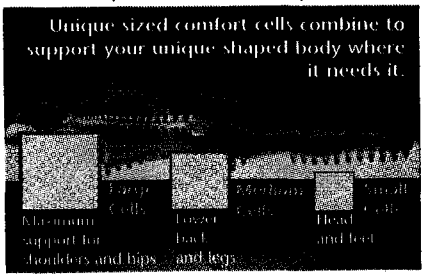
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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Green Lights for Torture

So there were WMDs in Iraq after all. They're called digital cameras. Partly because of them, the United States faces one of the most humiliating defeats in imperial history. But there's also a clear paper trail. Not just the long and copiously documented record of US torture, with many of its refinements acquired by the CIA from the Nazis after World War II, but the more recent lineage of encouragement.

Within a few days of the Trade Towers going down in September 2001, a vacationing FBI agent told an acquaintance of mine in Puerto Vallarta that detainees in the United States were being tortured. On May 3, 2004, two such detainees, a Pakistani called Javaid Iqbal and an Egyptian, Ehab Elmaghraby, filed a civil complaint with a US court describing their beatings in the Brooklyn Detention Center, one of them sodomized with a flashlight and put in a tiny cell lit twenty-four hours a day without blanket, mattress or toilet paper. Both were expelled from the country, pleading guilty to minor charges unrelated to terrorism. The center was harshly criticized in a 2003 Justice Department report for serious maltreatment of inmates.

By October of 2001, public opinion here was being softened up for the use of torture. The *Washington Post* published a piece by Walter Pincus citing FBI and Justice Department investigators as saying that "traditional civil liberties may have to be cast aside if they are to extract information about the Sept. 11 attacks and terrorist plans." Jonathan Alter, *Newsweek*'s liberal pundit, told readers in November that something was needed to "jump-start the stalled investigation." His tone was facetiously upbeat, in line with the "just hazing" approach now promoted by the pain-averse Rush Limbaugh: "Couldn't we at least subject [detainees] to psychological torture, like tapes of dying rabbits or high-decibel rap?" Alter also made respectful reference to Alan Dershowitz—then running around the country promoting the idea of "torture warrants" issued by judges—and to Israel, where "until 1999 an interrogation technique called 'shaking' was legal."

It was not far into the Afghan war that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld made plain his views on prisoners, after horrifying accounts began to surface of the treatment of Taliban POWs. He first said the United States was "not inclined to negotiate surrenders." He then amended this to say that the Taliban should be let out of the net but that foreign fighters should expect no mercy: "My hope is that they will either be killed or taken prisoner."

It turned out they endured both Rumsfeld's options. A year later, Jamie Doran, a British television producer, aired his documentary establishing beyond a reasonable doubt that hundreds of these prisoners—with no distinction between Taliban and foreign fighters—died either by suffocation in the container trucks used to transport them to prison, or by outright execution.

On the basis of interviews with eyewitnesses, Doran said US soldiers were present when the containers were opened, and that "a mess of urine, blood, faeces, vomit and rotting flesh was all that remained.... As the containers were lined up outside the prison, a [US] soldier accompanying the convoy was present when the prison commanders received orders to dispose of the evidence quickly." *Newsweek*'s investigation into the Afghan atrocities said, "American forces were working intimately with 'allies' who committed what could well qualify as war crimes."

Witnesses also stated that "600 Taliban PoWs... were taken to a spot in the desert and executed in the presence of about 30 to 40 U.S. special forces soldiers" (Toronto *Globe and Mail*, December 19, 2002). Other US soldiers are said to have been directly involved in prisoner torture and disposal of corpses. "The Americans did whatever they wanted," said one Afghan witness. "We had no power to stop them. Everything was under the control of the American commander."

From spring 2003, the Red Cross was complaining to US Army commanders in Iraq, and later to Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in Washington, about frightful treatment of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. "The elements we found were tantamount to torture," Pierre Kraehenbuehl, Red Cross operations director, told reporters this May after the *Wall Street Journal* disclosed the contents of a major Red Cross report. "There were clearly incidents of degrading and inhuman treatment." Kraehenbuehl said the investigations showed "a pattern, a broad system," rather than "isolated acts of individual members of the coalition forces." The report said suspects were "beaten severely by [coalition forces] personnel" and that one man, 28-year-old Baha Daoud Salim, died. In the words of the report, "His co-arrestees heard him screaming and asking for assistance."

The Red Cross began making its complaints just about the time the United States was on a full-press diplomatic campaign to compel other countries to sign bilateral agreements exempting US citizens, whether military or civilian, from potential jurisdiction of the new International Criminal Court in The Hague.

What's clear enough is that the quality of US leadership from the very top down, both civilian and military, is rancid. Accountability has long gone out the window. The venality and corruption of Bremer's coalition officials and many of Lieut. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez's officers have allowed discipline in the armed forces to degenerate into criminal thuggery. Iraqi families complain that after US troops have searched and smashed up their homes, the occupants return to find their safes broken open and their savings and valuables stolen.

It's ironic how the great moral crusade for freedom and democracy has foundered on a photo of Pfc. Lynndie England hauling around The Other on a dog leash. Even the images of torture degrade one's moral instincts with appalling speed. I'd love to see a photo of Ann Coulter clipping the leash on Rush Limbaugh—though not being Muslim, he probably wouldn't care. Remember, being forced to strip naked and have one's genitals menaced by savage dogs is something Muslims find abhorrent. Those Others are a bunch of ninnies, aren't they? Not like us Christians. ■

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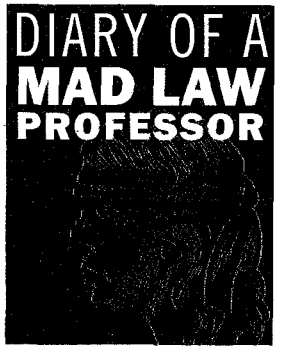
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

In Kind



As of this writing, seven in ten Americans want Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to remain at his post, a vote of confidence that exceeds that even for the President himself. The majority apparently agree with Bush that Rumsfeld is doing a "superb job," that war is hell, and—Geneva Conventions notwithstanding—that hell includes war crimes like rape and torture. So the people have spoken, the poll people at least—a jolly thumbs-up to "whatever it takes." Nevertheless, it's awfully hard not to look at those hoods and think Inquisition; or the piles of naked and sodomized men and think Abner Louima; or the battered corpses and think Emmett Till. According to *Time* magazine, the photo of the prisoner with electrodes attached to his arms and genitals is illustrative of "a classic torture method known as crucifixion.... This kind of standing torture was used by the Gestapo and by Stalin...although the wires and the threat of electrocution if you fell were a Brazilian police innovation."

This is not minor or mere "lack of discipline." This mess is the predictable byproduct of any authority that starts "sweeping" up "bad guys" and holding them without charge, in solitary and in secret, and presuming them guilty. It flourished beyond the reach of any formal oversight by Congress, by lawyers or by the judiciary, a condition vaguely rationalized as "consistent with" if not "precisely" pursuant to the Geneva Conventions. Bloodied prisoners were moved around to avoid oversight by international observers, a rather too disciplined bit of sanitizing. Indeed, all this unpleasantness embarrasses even Rumsfeld, who is feeling "terrible" these days. Just terrible.

Perhaps those approval ratings will shift as yet more revelations come to light; as the denial wears off and the criminality sinks in. But what does it mean for the state of our Union that so many ordinary Americans currently seem to resemble a battered wife explaining to the police how her husband was just trying to discipline that wailing baby when he accidentally tossed it out the window...

The populist cacophony of radio and TV bristles with bipartisan confusion. Free-floating claims that Abu Ghraib's victims "are not in there for traffic violations" obscure the lack of any charges at all against most of them. Democratic members of Congress cite the *Army Times* in calling for Rumsfeld's resignation. Rush Limbaugh cites Alan Dershowitz in a call for license to torture. The empire of good, the axis of evil—everything is all mixed up. Those who once denounced the wretched relativism of the so-called culture wars now plead context! Context! Everything is context! Worst of all, the buzzwords du jour refer not to domestic law or international convention but come straight out of the bad boy's handbook of classic excuses. Here's my list of gathered rationalizations shaping the surprising public tolerance of behavior nearly everyone simultaneously agrees is just plain wrong.

1. *They started it.* Unfortunately, the "they" usually meant is Al Qaeda or Osama bin Laden or the Taliban, not Iraq. Memory strains, but in point of fact, *we* started this one.

2. *A head for a head.* The four American contract soldiers who were burned and strung from a bridge in March have been widely invoked as justification for endless revenge—albeit an anticipatory-retroactive, circular kind of vengeance, since the abuse at Abu Ghraib took place months before the incident at the bridge. And some have cited the beheading of American Nicholas Berg as reason to respond "in kind."

3. *It's a dog-eat-dog world.* Hence dogs. Omnivorous, literal ones.

4. *Original sin.* G. Gordon Liddy, on his talk show, decried Pfc. Lynndie England's pulling a naked Iraqi man on a leash as follows: "It's pretty much a nightmare with women in the military.... It's not the sort of life suitable for women.... God didn't make them that way..."

5. *I was just following orders.* She was just following orders, insisted Pfc. England.

6. *They liked it.* As in Senator James Inhofe's bet that the prisoners in the photos "wake up every morning thanking Allah that Saddam Hussein is not in charge of these prisons." Earlier, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski had said conditions were so good that prisoners would never want to leave.

7. *They're a bunch of sissy crybabies.* Many commentators described the nudity and sexual assault of prisoners as "particularly" offensive to Iraqi men, as though allegations of rape with broom handles are less offensive here in the United States. Perhaps we have so often rationalized such treatment at the hands of supposedly "rogue" local law officers that we think of this as nothing "particular." Tom DeLay dismissively likened the hearings to "saying we need an investigation every time there's police brutality on the street." Moreover, the alleged "softening up" process resembled hazing techniques used to "toughen up" our own soldiers: *Time* cited former Marine Anthony Swofford as describing a "field fuck"—a staged mass rape of one Marine by the rest of the unit in order to "let off steam and entertain a visiting journalist." Rush Limbaugh said Abu Ghraib is no worse than initiation rites for Skull and Bones and proclaimed himself quite tired of the "unceasing handwringing in this touchy-feely little country of ours."

8. *You're blowing this out of proportion.* Senator Inhofe says that he is "more outraged by the outrage" in the media than by anything that went on in the prisons. And in true shoot-the-messenger mode, the Pentagon has suggested that it is the publicizing of the abuse that will endanger American interests rather than the fact of its occurrence.

9. *All the other kids are doing it.* G. Gordon Liddy's show discussed the notion that John Kerry should be charged because "he's the one who's admitted committing war crimes." And the eloquent Mr. Limbaugh called Democrats "elite sophisticates" who want others to think that "these thoughts" never cross their minds. "It's what they'd love to do to Bush. Torture."

Martin Luther King Jr., calling the Vietnam War a "demonic destructive suction tube," urged us to think not of ideology but of people. We might consider the quiet wisdom of that warning in the caldron of these times. ■

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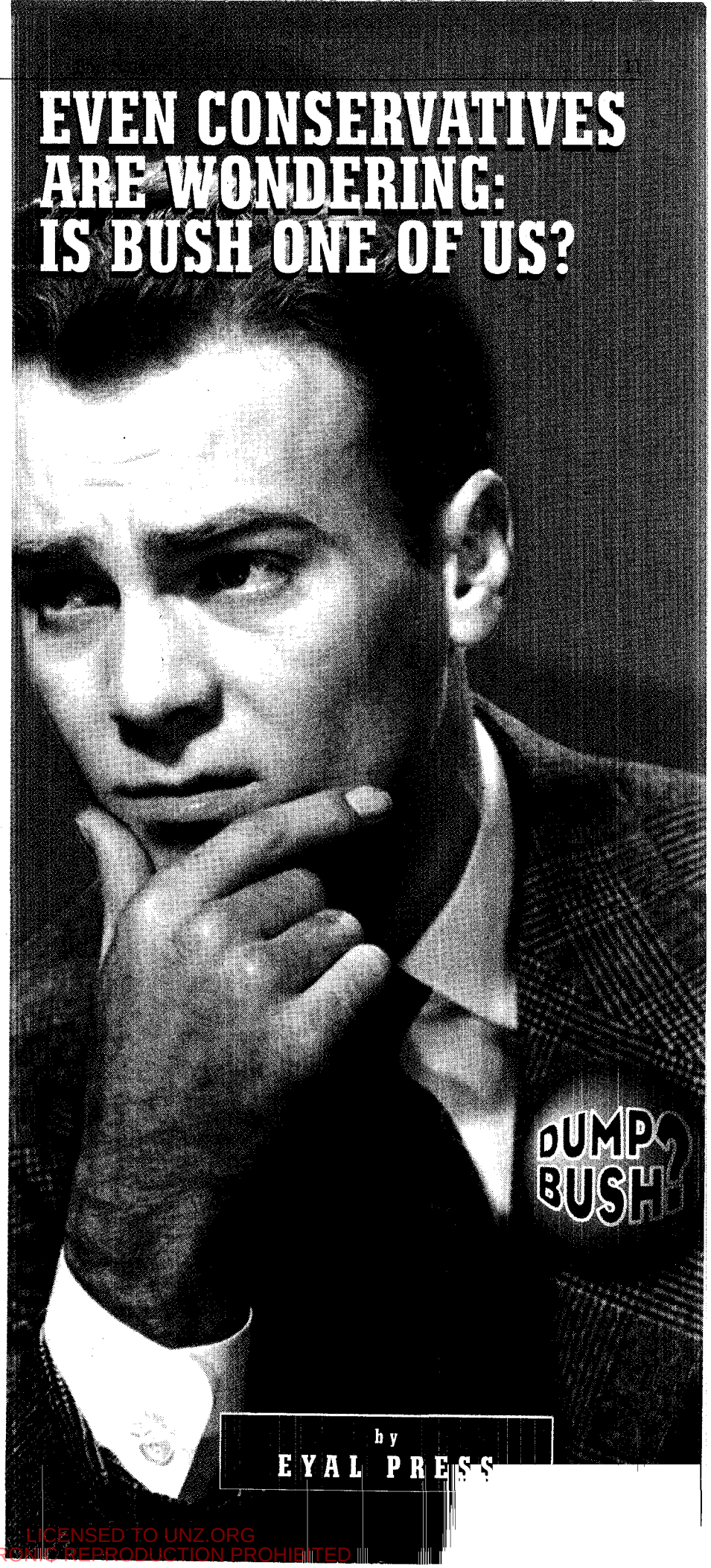
ARTICLES

EVEN CONSERVATIVES ARE WONDERING: IS BUSH ONE OF US?



by
EYAL PRESS

Most Americans long ago stopped believing that George W. Bush is what he claimed to be during the 2000 presidential campaign: a compassionate conservative. But is George W. Bush a conservative at all?

The answer might seem self-evident to progressives who have spent the past four years recoiling at the reactionary agenda the Bush Administration has advanced on everything from the environment to the courts, global warming to gay marriage. But while few people would confuse George W. Bush for a liberal, whether the policies he's championed qualify as traditionally conservative is by no means clear.

"Historically, conservatism in the United States has meant support for small government, balanced budgets, fiscal prudence and great skepticism about overseas adventures," notes Clyde Prestowitz, a former Reagan Administration official who back in the 1960s was among the young Republicans supporting Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, a conservative standard-bearer. "What I see now is an Administration that's not for any of these things."

While there are plenty of Republicans who would take issue with Prestowitz's definition of the term, a growing number of conservative thinkers and policy-makers have begun to echo this view, as thumbing through the pages of the conservative press makes clear. Hungry for hard-hitting criticism of the Iraq war? You're as likely to find it these days in publications like *The National Interest*, a conservative foreign affairs quarterly, and the recently launched *American Conservative* as in publications on the left. Want a rundown on the billions in government subsidies that the Bush Administration has lavished on corporations even as it claims to champion laissez-faire economics? Look no further than the website of the libertarian Cato Institute, which bristles with such information. How about sober analyses of the multibillion-dollar budget deficits the Administration has overseen? There's no better source than the staid, conservative business press.

Of course, disagreement among conservatives in America, a term that encompasses everyone from followers of Pat Robertson to admirers of Milton Friedman, is hardly unprecedented. Yet the fissures that have emerged of late are different, pit-

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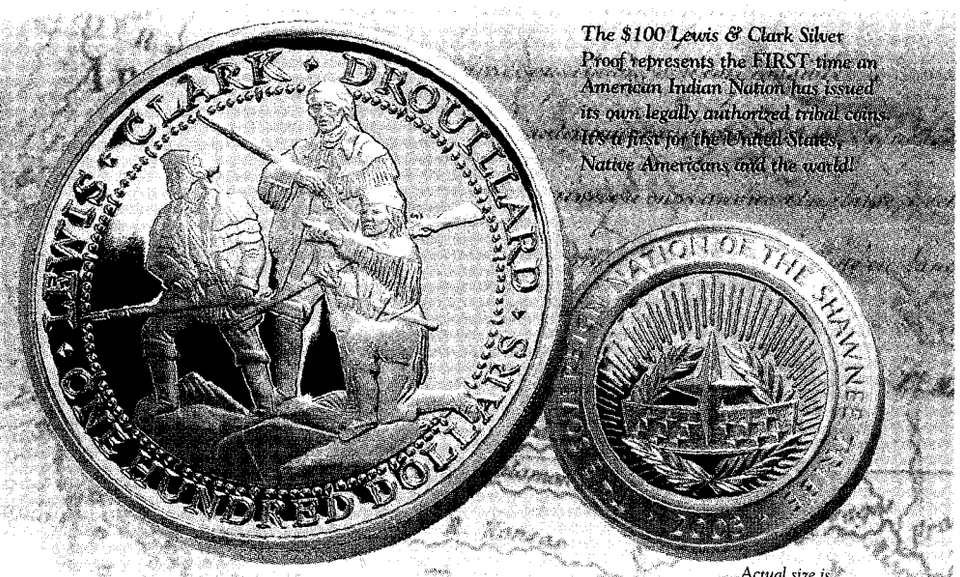

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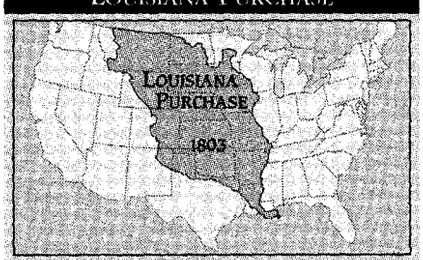

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ting not only social conservatives against economic ones (a familiar rift within the GOP) but realists against neoconservatives, supply-siders against deficit hawks, proponents of limited government against defenders of what looks to some like a curious form of Big Government Republicanism. In some ways, moreover, these fissures cut deeper, for they are rooted not merely in tactical disputes about how to advance a shared agenda but in basic disagreements about what being a conservative in America actually means.

Does it mean fighting messianic wars to spread America's values into the far corners of the world? As the body bags continue to pile up in Iraq, a growing number of establishment conservatives have begun to voice doubts. Does it mean ramming through tax cuts at a time when the nation faces an array of new threats and challenges? Not to those conservatives who take the notion of fiscal responsibility seriously.

Interviews with an array of conservative thinkers and policymakers reveal a rising disquiet on these matters among people who have spent most of their lives proudly identifying with the Republican Party and the philosophy for which they've long assumed it stood. At the root of their discomfort is a feeling not that the Bush Administration is too conservative but that it has forsaken the guiding principles of conservatism—prudence, caution, restraint—to pursue an agenda that is messianic and radical. To these dissenters, it is an agenda that seems less a fulfillment of classic conservative principles than an exercise in hubris reminiscent of the ideological excesses of another era, the 1960s, only with the shoe on the other party's foot.

Many conservatives criticize the Iraq venture as 'Wilsonian,' a crusading internationalism inflected by overweening faith in military force.

Reaganites, or Trotskyists?

Nothing has stirred up such feelings more than the war in Iraq, and the neoconservative foreign policy vision of which the war is an expression.

To hear neoconservatives tell it, the Bush Administration's crusade against terrorism is the logical extension of the muscular, moralizing foreign policy that Ronald Reagan deployed to defeat the "evil empire" in the 1980s. In 1996 William Kristol and Robert Kagan co-wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* calling for a "Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" for the post–cold war world, a vision subsequently embraced by the Project for a New American Century and prominent neocons like Richard Perle.

But is neoconservatism simply Reaganism adapted to changing times? According to Stefan Halper, who served in the Reagan Administration, and Jonathan Clarke, a fellow at the Cato Institute, it is nothing of the sort. In the April 2004 issue of *The American Spectator*, Halper and Clarke argue that, contrary to the gun-slinging figure neoconservatives invoke, Reagan was a conservative internationalist who structured his foreign policy around containment and diplomacy, an approach many neoconservatives dismissed as feckless at the time. (In 1981, for example, Reagan resisted pleas from hard-liners to place an economic embargo on Poland after Warsaw cracked down on the Solidarity movement, a decision characterized by the neoconservative Norman Podhoretz as "following a strategy of helping the Soviet Union stabilize its empire.")

Of course, Reagan also pursued his share of aggressive actions, such as arming the Nicaraguan *contras* and invading Grenada, that neoconservatives cheered. But as Halper noted in an interview, Reagan balanced aggression with diplomacy, engaging in extensive arms control negotiations with Mikhail Gorbachev. "The neocons edit history to extract and emphasize Reagan's moral purpose, which he certainly had," maintains Halper, "while ignoring the nuanced, multidimensional Reagan who found diplomatic solutions through pragmatic approaches—who had many arrows in his policy quiver, not just the arrow of military action."

It's notable that Halper and Clarke's essay appears in *The American Spectator*, which, like most conservative publications, tends to support GOP foreign policy. If the editors there are experiencing second thoughts, they are not alone. *National Review*, which enthusiastically supported the Iraq war, recently published an editorial, "An End to Illusion," that criticized the Bush Administration for its "underestimation... of the difficulty of implanting democracy in alien soil." It's a view that conservative columnist George Will has also voiced. "This administration cannot be trusted to govern if it cannot be counted on to think and, having thought, to have second thoughts," wrote Will in a scathing recent column on Iraq. To these critics, the spirit behind the Iraq venture is not conservative but "Wilsonian," a crusading internationalism inflected by overweening faith in military force.

All of which sounds familiar to Scott McConnell. The executive editor of *The American Conservative*, McConnell is a former neoconservative who broke ranks in the 1990s, when publications like *The Weekly Standard* were clamoring for a more belligerent US stance toward China, Iraq and Yugoslavia. This was a time when many liberals were calling for humanitarian intervention in places like Bosnia and Rwanda. The two strands converged, McConnell notes, in the peculiar alliance that formed over Iraq. "Actually, the neocons were originally liberal hawks," he says. "When I first became a neocon I was a registered Democrat." Prestowitz, author of the recent book *Rogue Nation*, echoes this. Today's neocons are not conservatives, he told me, but "right-wing Trotskyists" who are every bit as determined as their counterparts on the left once were about revolutionizing the world. Clarke and Halper call them "Wilsonians with guns."

Conservatives alienated from this expansive vision do not fall into a single ideological camp. Some, like Pat Buchanan, one of the founders of *The American Conservative*, are nationalists who, like the isolationist old right of the pre–cold war era, combine skepticism about foreign entanglements with opposition to immigration and free trade; others, like McConnell and John Mearsheimer, a professor of international relations at the University of Chicago, are realists who favor a hardheaded approach rooted in pragmatic rather than utopian considerations.

In October of last year, Mearsheimer, Ted Galen Carpenter of the Cato Institute and others came together to form the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy, an organization that opposes "the move toward empire" in favor of a "restrained and focused for-

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eign policy." Mearsheimer acknowledges that some elements of the Bush doctrine—the faith in military force, the suspicion of multilateral institutions—have deep roots within certain segments of the American right. But in the past, he argues, Republicans have hewed more to the sort of realism articulated in 2002 by Brent Scowcroft, who warned that attacking Iraq would create "an explosion of outrage against us" and likely require "a large-scale, long-term military occupation."

Neoconservatives are well aware that events on the ground have lent credibility to such views, which is perhaps why the editors of *The Weekly Standard* recently felt compelled to publish an article about the need to resist "the realist temptation"—i.e., diplomacy and engagement—vis-à-vis Iran. The problem for the neocons is that many conservatives realize that imperialist ventures don't come cheap; implanting "freedom and democracy" on foreign soil requires just the sort of "big government" they are supposed to be against. As Leon Hadar of Cato observes, "A conservative administration is now suggesting that all you need is, yes, government—a few days and nights of aerial bombing, 140,000 US troops, bureaucrats with good intentions and economic aid from Washington—and, voilà! we have 'nation building.'" Halper and Clarke note the irony of the *Wall Street Journal*'s "waxing enthusiastic about using taxpayer money for electricity and water services in Iraq," a spectacle that horrifies other conservatives. "Many traditional, mainstream Republicans see America's most vital juices being expended in Iraq," says Halper. "They see an outflow of tax dollars and think of all the local services they will not have, all the unfunded state requirements, all of that not happening, and they worry about very large deficits saddling their children with debt."

'LBJ got pilloried [by conservatives] for guns and butter. It's now guns and butter and tax cuts all put together.' —Peter Peterson

'Deficits Don't Matter'

Well, at least *some* are worrying. When it comes to deficits, the architects of the Bush Administration's economic agenda have largely averted their eyes from a problem conservatives are supposed to care about. Recall how, a decade ago, Newt Gingrich and Republican members of the 104th Congress pledged, in the Contract With America, to pass a series of bills that would restore citizens' faith in their leaders. Topping the list was "The Fiscal Responsibility Act: A balanced budget/tax limitation amendment and a legislative line-item veto to restore fiscal responsibility to an out-of-control Congress."

By 2003, the party that spent the Clinton years singing this tune had turned a projected surplus of $5.6 trillion into a projected deficit of $4 trillion—in two years. As the London *Financial Times* observed after Bush's second round of tax cuts was passed, this was not conservatism but madness. "On the management of fiscal policy, the lunatics are now in charge of the asylum," the paper commented. "Reason cuts no ice; economic theory is dismissed; and contrary evidence is ignored. But watching the world's economic superpower slowly destroy perhaps the world's most enviable fiscal position is something to behold."

In this regard, at least, the Bush Administration can legitimately claim to be the heirs of Ronald Reagan, whose own supply-side policies led to the crippling deficits of the 1980s. But as Charles Kolb, a Republican who served in the Reagan Administration and as deputy assistant to the first President Bush for domestic policy, noted in an interview, many fiscal conservatives view the circumstances today—with a record number of Americans about to retire and the nation at war—as different. Testifying recently before Congress, Kolb pointed out that, at current trends, government debt will rise to 69 percent of the economy in 2020 and 250 percent in 2040—a level typically associated with developing nations on the verge of bankruptcy.

Kolb's concerns are echoed by Peter Peterson, chairman of the Blackstone Group and Commerce Secretary under Richard Nixon. A graduate of the University of Chicago and a devotee of Milton Friedman, Peterson views Bush's measures not as tax cuts but "deferred tax increases on our children and grandchildren," since at some point future generations will have to foot the bill for the gifts now being lavished on the wealthy. "I'm rather offended that fat cats like me are getting tax cuts which over the long term will only serve to increase taxes on my own children and grandchildren at a time when our entitlement programs are underfunded," says Peterson. Back in the 1960s, he notes, conservatives took liberals to task for their reckless fiscal policies. "LBJ got pilloried [by conservatives] for guns and butter. It's now guns and butter and tax cuts all put together."

Warren Rudman, the former Republican senator from New Hampshire who now co-chairs the Concord Coalition, likewise sees a role reversal under way. Watching the Republican Party drown the country in a sea of debt, and hearing Democrats like John Kerry promise to remedy the situation, Rudman says he feels like he's watching "a version of the movie *Trading Places*." It's a reversal that has at least one group of traditional Republican backers deeply concerned. In a recent *Fortune* magazine survey of 1,000 CEOs, roughly half said they were "extremely or very concerned" about the ballooning deficits.

Then again, there's no need to worry if one's faith in supply-side economics is sufficiently strong. "This administration clearly has an unfettered belief that the more you cut taxes, the more the economy is going to grow," says Rudman. "It's based not on fact but on faith." What's odd is that many people close to the President have expressed similar skepticism in the past. It was the President's father who famously dubbed supply-side theory "voodoo economics." N. Gregory Mankiw, the Harvard economist who now serves as head of the Council of Economic Advisers, dismissed supply-side theory as "fad economics" peddled by "charlatans and cranks" in an academic textbook he wrote. This heretical section of the textbook has since been removed, which is not surprising when one considers the fate of people like former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, who earned the wrath of the President's inner circle for not accepting the view that, as Dick Cheney evidently believes, "deficits don't matter."

"It's shameful the way the Republican Congress has retreated [from fiscal conservatism]," Joe Scarborough, an alum from the GOP class of '94 who now hosts MSNBC's *Scarborough Country*, commented recently. "In the end, it's all about getting re-elected, staying in power.... It's disgusting."

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The Party of Big Government

Of course, there's a more cynical way to interpret the Administration's tax-cutting agenda: Punching holes in the budget is a good thing, since it will eventually force Congress to begin slashing federal programs (Social Security, Medicare) that are politically untouchable right now. This is the long-term vision of people like Grover Norquist, who believes Republicans can begin "starving the beast" (the federal government) once they lock in a majority in the House and Senate and cement their control over a one-party state.

There's only one small problem with the theory: It assumes that, if given the chance, Republicans actually would shrink the size of government. Over the past three and a half years the Bush Administration has shown itself to be anything but principled in this respect. It has instead turned the GOP into what Arizona Senator John McCain has aptly termed the party of "out-of-control spending"—a party addicted to pork and massive subsidies for its corporate benefactors.

"The Bush Administration is not against big government," says Kevin Phillips, a one-time Republican whose recent book, *American Dynasty*, chronicles the crony capitalism long practiced by the Bush family. "They're against the portion of it that regulates business and requires tax increases, against a welfare system. When it's the latter, they're against big government, but when it's big government that takes care of the oil industry or bails out financial institutions or pumps money into the Pentagon, then they tend to be in favor of that."

Indeed, for Pentagon contractors like Boeing, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, the era of big government is not over—it's never been more firmly entrenched. The same goes for the sugar, grain and cotton producers whose subsidies the Administration has assiduously protected, as well as the oil, gas and coal industries. The pattern has not escaped the notice of some conservatives, whose anger at Bush's profligate spending and disregard for free-market principles is growing. "This Administration has not been for small government at all," says Veronique de Rugy, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. "It's a big spending administration. Just look at the farm bill, which is pure corporate welfare. Bush's farm bill actually moved against the one signed by Clinton [in 1996], which at least tried to cut down some of the subsidies. It goes against every market principle you can imagine."

Jerry Taylor of the Cato Institute has described the Administration's energy plan in much the same way: "three parts corporate welfare and one part cynical politics...a smorgasbord of handouts and subsidies for virtually every energy lobby in Washington." McCain, whom the hard right views as a traitor to the movement, has proposed establishing a corporate welfare termination commission that would identify and eliminate tax breaks and subsidies handed out annually to the private sector. It's the sort of thing you would think an administration committed to the notion of laissez-faire economics (not to mention the virtue of self-reliance, preached incessantly to the poor) would rush to embrace, but of course, it hasn't.

To some extent, this departure from principle is nothing new: A tension has long existed within the American right between free-market ideology, which makes conservatives theoretically hostile to government, and fealty to big business, whose leaders frequently ask for (and receive) government's help. Yet the Bush Administration has taken things to new extremes, allowing industry to regulate itself to an unprecedented degree while not even pretending to keep an arm's length from companies like Halliburton.

When the tax cuts and the Iraq war are put together, along with the supplemental spending bills and the spiraling deficits, it's hardly surprising that some conservative thinkers have begun to voice dissent. Many of those interviewed told me that if the same policies were being pursued by a Democrat, conservatives across the country would be apoplectic.

Might this cost George W. Bush support?

Pete Peterson, for one, says he's undecided about what to do come November. "I've been a Republican all my life, but I'm going to wait and see," he says. "I think there's a considerable group of Republicans who think of themselves as fiscally responsible and are very concerned." Clyde Prestowitz, who has spent much of the past nine months traveling around the country to talk about foreign policy, says he has been "amazed by the frequency with which people come up to me after a speech and say, 'You know, I'm a Republican but I agree with you.' The number who have said, I voted for Bush last time and I can't do it again—it's happening."

But even if Bush manages to defeat John Kerry this fall, the question will remain what the legacy of his presidency will be for the movement he claims to represent. On one level, that movement has never been in better shape: As Robert Kuttner argued recently in *The American Prospect*, the vision of a one-party state that activists like Grover Norquist dream about is not so far from being realized. The GOP already controls both houses of Congress. Republican judges sit on a majority of the nation's federal courts. The right commands a network of think tanks, publications and Beltway lobbyists whose zeal, dedication and resources have no parallel on the left these days.

Yet, as liberals discovered in the 1960s, success can breed arrogance, blinding leaders to problems until it is too late. Back in 1969 Kevin Phillips famously predicted that a Republican majority was emerging on the heels of the growing backlash against a liberalism that had grown fat and arrogant, and that had come to be associated with grandiose policy initiatives that, in Vietnam as on the home front, came crashing up against reality. Today, at the very moment when Republicans seem more powerful than ever, Phillips sees the potential for history to repeat itself.

"Any ideology that enjoys success first fulfills itself and then indulges in some hubris," he says. "I found this to apply very nicely to '60s liberalism, and now I think it's happening again. There's been a drift toward extreme policy on the right in taxes, in the environment, in letting the lobbyists and contributors dictate things behind the scene. You had a movement toward the extreme with Iraq, with the religious right—it's kind of across the board."

Is the Bush Administration's agenda conservative, then? "I would say we're at a point where much of the conservative policy framework has been radicalized to an extent that I'm not sure what it should be called." ■

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VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF OUR OWN IDEALS, THE RIGHT TO LIFE IS SO FUNDAMENTAL THAT KILLING THE INNOCENT TO ADVANCE ANY PURPOSE, HOWEVER WORTHY, IS WRONG.

Walid Shaker Hussam Jasmi Bassam GhaliArkan Daif Muhammad Mun'in
Rasul family Manal SaadAllah Matti Zahraa Hashem Zeena or Zaina Akra
Akram Hamoodi Wissam Abed or Wisam 'Abid Hassan Hamoodi Intisar 'Abo
Khawla 'Ali al-Tayyar Intisar 'Abd al-Hussain al-Tayyar Kamaran Abdurazaq
Muhamed Mohammed Amin (son of Salma) James Kachadoorian Nicolas Aziz
Kachadoorian Rowand Mohammed Suleiman Muhammed al-Barnehi Daif
Majeed al-Sa'doon Tuamer Abdel Hamid Wife of Khalif Abdel Mihyedin
bar Abdullah Khaled Lahoumi Ahmed Jaafer Hashim Majeed Hashim Mo
hammed Aani Ali Jassim al-Khazraji Muhammad Subhi Hassan al-Qubaisi
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dul Razzaq al-Assam Asaad al-Shareeda Muhammad Abdul Ridha
Salim Khalid Majed Khalid al Munwar or al-Jumaidy Hmud Kadh
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KAREN CALDICOTT

The Moral Case Against the Iraq War

PAUL SAVOY

Let's look this thing in the eye once and for all.
—Arundhati Roy

As the Iraq war continues into its second year, the Bush Administration's reasons for being there are more indefensible than ever. Prewar claims regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have all proved to be wrong; the number of terrorists in Iraq has increased rather than decreased; more American troops were killed in April than were lost during the entire invasion phase of the war; the systemic and barbarous abuse of Iraqi detainees contradicts the most basic values the Administration claimed it would bring to Iraq; and the uprisings in Falluja and at least half a dozen other cities portend a nationwide insurgency by both Sunnis and Shiites against the US presence. Yet the latest polls—including one conducted after the revelations about the torture of Iraqi prisoners—show that about half of Americans remain convinced that the war was morally justified. President Bush, in a speech on March 19 marking the first anniversary of the conflict, articulated a moral defense of the war that has been repeated many times: "No one can argue that the Iraqi people would be better off" with Saddam Hussein's regime "back in the palaces." Even those who opposed the war have, up to now, found the President's moral argument difficult to answer. The Indian novelist Arundhati Roy, in a speech to this year's session of the World Social Forum in Bombay, lamented how "plenty of antiwar activists have retreated in confusion since the capture of Saddam Hussein. Isn't the world better off without Saddam Hussein? they ask timidly" [see Roy, "The New American Century," February 9].

The problem opponents of the war have had in responding to President Bush's claim of moral legitimacy, as University of California linguistics professor George Lakoff suggests, is that they have addressed the moral issue in the terms the President has framed it rather than reframing the issue in their own moral terms. Talking about the world, or at least Iraq, being "better off" avoids confronting the civilian carnage caused by the war. As the late Robert Nozick cautioned in his classic work on the moral basis of freedom, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, we should be wary of talking about the overall good of society or of a particular country. There is no social entity called Iraq that benefited from some self-sacrifice it suffered for its own greater good, like a patient who voluntarily endures some pain to be better off than before. There were only individual human beings living in Iraq before the war, with their individual lives. Sacrificing the lives of some of them for the benefit of others killed them and benefited the others. Nothing more. Each of those Iraqis killed in the war was a separate person, and the unfinished life each of them lost was the only life he or she had, or would ever have. They clearly are not better off now that Saddam is gone from power.

There is only one truly serious question about the morality of the war, and that is the question posed more than fifty years ago by French Nobel laureate Albert Camus, looking back on two world wars that had slaughtered more than 70 million people: *When do we have the right to kill our fellow human beings or let them be killed?* What is needed is a national debate in the presidential election campaign that addresses the most important moral issue of our time. It is an issue we are required to face not

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only as a matter of moral obligation to all those Iraqis killed in the war, but to the 772 American servicemen and -women who, as of May 10, had lost their lives and the more than 4,000 US soldiers injured in Iraq. The debate should begin by moving beyond the narrow factual focus on WMD intelligence to an examination of the broad moral principles and values governing the use of deadly force against other human beings. Those principles are to be found in the basic precepts of our more than 200-year-old constitutional tradition and criminal jurisprudence, and in widely accepted standards of international humanitarian law.

Reliable estimates by independent organizations indicate that more civilians died in the first month of the war than were killed in the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. A five-week investigation by the Associated Press reported at least 3,240 civilian deaths between March 20 and April 20, 2003, including 1,896 in Baghdad alone. The AP survey notes that "hundreds, possibly thousands, of victims" are not reflected in the totals because the count excluded victims not taken to hospitals as well as records of hospitals in areas too remote or dangerous to visit. Between April 20, 2003, and the beginning of the wider insurgency almost a year later, at least 500 Iraqi civilians were reported by Iraq's Interior Ministry to have been killed by American-led forces in checkpoint shootings, misdirected arms fire and delayed explosions of cluster bombs. Hundreds more have been killed in the siege of Falluja, according to the director of the city's general hospital.

'Life is the immediate gift of God, a right inherent by nature in every individual.'
—William Blackstone

But even if as many as 5,000 civilians have been killed by US forces, isn't freedom for 25 million people in Iraq worth the cost of 5,000 lives? Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard, argued this cost-benefit analysis in making the moral case for war in the *New York Times Magazine* before the invasion: "The choice [was] one between two evils, between containing and leaving a tyrant in place and the targeted use of force, which will kill people but free a nation from the tyrant's grip." Ignatieff concluded that killing people was the better choice if the United States was willing "to build freedom, not just for the Iraqis but also for the Palestinians, along with a greater sense of security for Israel."

This is the moral reasoning of Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Invoking the lesser-of-two-evils defense to justify his killing an old pawnbroker and stealing her money, Raskolnikov argues: "Kill her, take her money, dedicate it to serving mankind, to the general welfare. Well—what do you think—isn't this petty little crime effaced by thousands of good deeds? For one life, thousands of lives saved from ruin and collapse. One death and a hundred lives—there's arithmetic for you." A few thousand dead Iraqis and freedom for 25 million.

What is overlooked by those who believe the benefits of the war outweigh the costs is that killing even one innocent person to benefit others violates the most basic human right—the right to life. The right to life is one of those unalienable rights enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. "Life is the immediate gift of God, a right inherent by nature in every individual," William Blackstone wrote in his eighteenth-century *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, one of the leading sources of American civil liberties. What Blackstone meant when he characterized the right to life as a God-given right is that it is beyond the power of any mere government to abrogate or repeal. Innocent people may not be killed or injured by the state, even when a majority believes it serves the greater good.

In a prelude to the "Grand Inquisitor" scene in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan asks his faith-based brother Alyosha a question we all need to ask ourselves about the children who were killed or injured in the Iraq war: "Let's assume that you were called upon to build the edifice of human destiny so that men would finally be happy and would find peace and tranquillity. If you knew that, in order to attain this, you would have to torture just one single creature, let's say the little girl who beat her chest so desperately in the outhouse, and that on her unavenged tears you could build that edifice, would you agree to do it?"

Even more horrifying than the torture of Iraqi prisoners by their American captors has been the unnecessary suffering and death inflicted on the Iraqi people by the war itself. One of those children on whose unavenged tears the edifice of freedom has been built in Iraq was 12-year-old Ali Ismael Abbas, who was so badly burned in a US missile attack on Baghdad that his entire torso was black, his arms so mutilated that, as *New Yorker* correspondent Jon Lee Anderson described the hospital scene, they "looked like something that might be found in a barbecue pit." His family, which included his pregnant mother, his father and his six brothers and sisters, were all killed by the blast. Some of their bodies were so unrecognizable that all Anderson could see in morgue photographs was a collection of charred body parts and some red flesh. The remains of other family members were mutilated grotesqueries. "[His mother's] face had been cut in half, as if by a giant cleaver, and her mouth was yawning open.... The body of his brother was all there, it seemed, but from the nose up his head was gone, simply sheared off, like the head of a rubber doll. His mouth, like that of his mother, was open, as if he were screaming." Judging from the poll numbers after the fall of the Iraqi regime, the seven or eight out of ten Americans who backed the war were prepared to build the edifice of freedom and democracy on the broken bodies not of one, but of hundreds, possibly thousands, of Iraqi children killed or maimed or burned in the conflict.

Viewed in the light of our own moral ideals, as embodied in our constitutional tradition, the right to life is so fundamental that killing the innocent to advance the cause of freedom of electoral choice or any other purpose, however worthy, must be regarded as wrong. We denounce terrorists because when the freedom of self-determination they seek is weighed in the balance against the right to life of innocent people, it is the right to life that our collective conscience has decided should prevail. Terrorism is simply a criminal technique for coercing a political agenda by killing innocent people. And it should make no difference whether the people who do the killing are freedom fighters like Palestinian suicide bombers, who *purposefully* kill civilians, or freedom fighters like the American liberators of the Iraqi people, who aim at military targets but who *know* with sub-

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stantial certainty that they will incidentally kill civilians. In the eyes of the criminal law, a person is regarded as intending the death of another when he either has the purpose to cause the death of the victim or when he knows that death is substantially certain to result from his acts.

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned before the war that, despite the military's best efforts to prevent civilian casualties, "people are going to die." Given this knowledge aforethought, the Administration cannot continue to pretend that the civilian deaths in Iraq were accidental. The mother killed in a Baghdad bomb blast holding her baby so tightly they could not be pried apart, and the thousands of other innocent Iraqis killed in the war, were the victims of intentional homicide, however accidental or acceptable their deaths may have appeared on Fox News or CNN.

There is one exception to the prohibition against taking innocent human life, recognized by both our own principles of criminal jurisprudence and international rules of warfare. Deadly force may be used in self-defense even when innocent people will be killed in the combat required to defeat the aggressor. Although international rules of warfare prohibit the purposeful targeting of civilians, even in a defensive war, the law makes an exception for the incidental or "collateral" killing of the innocent because civilian casualties are frequently unavoidable in mounting an effective military operation against the enemy.

However, when a nation acts in self-defense before it is actually attacked, international law requires an imminent threat. As statements by CIA director George Tenet have made clear, the White House did not even have probable cause to believe its own prewar claims, both express and implied, that the danger was imminent. Intelligence analysts "never said there was an 'imminent' threat," Tenet insisted in a February 5 speech at Georgetown University defending his agency. But according to the President, the United States had the right to go to war on a lesser standard than imminence. The Administration's position, first announced in its 2002 National Security Strategy, is that military force can be used pre-emptively whenever a threat, however remote or improbable, involves the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. As President Bush argued in a February 8 interview with NBC's Tim Russert, "It is essential that when we see a threat, we deal with those threats before they become imminent. It's too late if they become imminent."

The elimination of the longstanding requirement of imminence by the Bush doctrine of pre-emption has been roundly condemned by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who called it a "fundamental challenge to the principles on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last fifty-eight years." But for many Americans living in the shadow of September 11, common sense and simple prudence seemed to dictate a policy that says, in effect, *we should kill them before they can kill us*. What critics of the Bush doctrine failed to make clear is that the concept of imminence is essential because it actualizes the most basic moral principle upon which not only the United Nations Charter but our own constitutional system of government, is based: the sanctity of innocent human life.

The self-defense exception to the general principle protecting innocent life is not based on any cost-benefit calculation. Rather, the killing of innocent people is excused as a concession to human weakness. Self-defense in the face of an imminent threat of being killed is what Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes called one of those "can't helps" of life. No community of human beings facing an immediate threat of attack can reasonably be expected to allow themselves to be killed in order to avoid killing innocent people in the aggressor nation. Such extraordinary self-sacrifice is not demanded of ordinary mortals.

But when a threat is not imminent in the sense that there is sufficient time to protect ourselves without killing innocent people—by using more rigorous weapons inspections, for example—we lack that "can't help" that Justice Holmes suggested was a condition for sacrificing human life in a civilized society. To say, as the President continues to insist, that he had "no choice" is to make the absurd and horrific claim that he had no choice but to kill thousands of innocent people. We reply that the moral principles contained in our criminal and constitutional jurisprudence forbid the use of war to check tyrants and terrorists who threaten us with death unless there is such a clear and present danger to the nation that taking the lives of innocent men, women and children is the only way we can save our own lives.

The final argument advanced by the Administration, as well as some human rights advocates, is that the war was morally justifiable as a humanitarian intervention to defend the Iraqi people from mass slaughter by Saddam's brutal regime. However, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention cannot be applied retroactively to morally justify war as a means of punishing a political leader for past atrocities, such as Saddam's killing of more than 100,000 Kurds in the Anfal campaign, which occurred almost fifteen years before the invasion. Because it is essentially a principle that permits the defense of others, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, like the concept of self-defense, requires actually occurring or imminent large-scale killing to justify the use of military force. Criteria proposed in 2001 by an international commission of legal scholars and practitioners would permit humanitarian intervention to defend a vulnerable population from "large scale loss of life" or "large scale 'ethnic cleansing'" that is either actually "occurring" or "imminently likely to occur." Human Rights Watch, applying these criteria to the Iraq war in its 2004 World Report, concludes, "That was not the case in Saddam Hussein's Iraq in March 2003.... despite the horrors of Saddam Hussein's rule, the invasion cannot be justified as a humanitarian intervention."

Freedom and democracy for Iraq are "worth fighting for, dying for and standing for," President Bush declared in a November 2003 speech, but no one asked the Iraqis who were killed in the war whether they were willing to sacrifice their lives as part of a demonstration project to create a democratic revolution in the Middle East. The very minimum that people have a right to expect from any effort to graft democracy onto their nation is that the donor nation honor the principle of no extermination without representation.

Denouncing the war a week after the invasion, Kofi Annan, in an unusually candid interview with *New York Times* reporter Felicity Barringer, said the UN Security Council authorized "disarmament, not mass murder." American criminal law defines murder as the purposeful or knowing killing of a human being without justi-

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fication or excuse. If, as the relevant law and facts prove, the President's decision to invade Iraq cannot be justified or excused as a war of liberation or an act of self-defense or humanitarian intervention, then the killing of thousands of innocent people in Iraq fits the legal definition of murder and conspiracy to commit murder. While there are various legal and political obstacles to actually prosecuting the President—either in an international tribunal or an American court—we should not shrink from saying that taking the country to war was the wrong thing to do, not merely in the sense that the Administration's prewar claims about WMD were "wrong," but in the same sense in which mass murder is wrong.

"Each age and place has its own style of evil," *Time* essayist Lance Morrow observes in his book *Evil: An Investigation*. The history of radical evil up to now has been primarily a story of world-class criminals, each with his own method of mass killing, internment, expulsion and terror. What is unique about the kind of evil the Bush Administration has brought into the world is that a global law-enforcement campaign to bring a world-class criminal to justice has itself become a vast criminal enterprise. It is one of the bedrock principles of the rule of law that a law-enforcement officer cannot break the law as a means of enforcing the law. "For my part, I think it is a less evil that some criminals should escape than that the government should play an ignoble part," Holmes wrote in a famous dissent that announced a constitutional principle of "lesser evils" that would eventually become prevailing law. The principle was most eloquently articulated by Justice Louis Brandeis: "Our government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or for ill, it teaches the whole people by its example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself; it invites anarchy."

The capture of Saddam Hussein, who may have killed as many as 300,000 people, ends a twenty-four-year reign of terror and might finally bring a measure of justice to the Iraqi people. But what would we think of a police chief whose war against crime resulted in killing thousands of innocent bystanders in the course of apprehending a criminal suspect, even a criminal as despicable as Saddam? The officer who breaks the law, who becomes a law unto himself, like the out-of-control cop played by Michael Chiklis in the Fox cable drama *The Shield*—"Al Capone with a badge," to borrow a line from the script—is more dangerous than the criminal and, like the American guards who committed the horrific abuses at Abu Ghraib prison, becomes a criminal himself. The false charge that Saddam was reaching for his weapons of mass destruction when US troops attacked bears an uncanny resemblance to the pretexts for the use of deadly force that document a long and shameful history of incidents of police misconduct in cities across America. The evil of this President, once acclaimed for his "moral clarity," is the evil of police violence on a global scale—the evil of the law-enforcement officer who regards himself as above the law and thereby undermines the very foundation of law and morality.

If, in the 2004 presidential election campaign, voters were to compel the candidates to confront the profound moral and legal questions raised by the use of military power that needlessly extinguished the lives of children, of entire families, of great numbers of ordinary Iraqis who had as much of a right to live as we do, there might ultimately emerge a nonpartisan basis for a national consensus about the war, in much the same way that a universal accord has developed in the United States about the immorality and illegality of police conduct in violation of an individual's civil liberties. While there will always be disagreement about the way we should wage the war on terrorism, as there will be about the way we should fight the war on crime, a global form of law enforcement that unnecessarily kills thousands of innocent people to punish or prevent crimes for which they bear no responsibility is plainly and simply wrong. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

HIV/AIDS patients, which is similarly transmitted by intravenous drug users. Here in the States, this problem is most prevalent in the burgeoning prison population. I refer your readers to *Prison Nation*, available from Prison Legal News in Seattle. FRED VILLAUME

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

Ribera, NM

■ Those fighting against the forces of the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq are more and more often called "insurgents." Not too surprising from the mainstream media, but now I see it in *The Nation* ["Buyer's Remorse on Iraq," May 10]. My dictionary defines "insurgent" as "a person who rises in forcible opposition to lawful authority." What "lawful authority"? Certainly not those who illegally invaded Iraq. If we use this label often enough it turns those fighting to defend their homeland into something else and conveys a sense of legitimacy to the invaders. *The Nation* should not participate in this ghastly process.

CURTIS D. CLEMSON

Rock Springs, Wyo.

■ I fully expect the mainstream media to parrot the Bush line that he's running for *re*-election. But when *The Nation* does the same thing ["Mission Unaccomplished," May 17], I have to wonder whether there is any independent media at all. Bush is not running for *re*-election. He was never elected. He was chosen, first by the Supreme Court, then by a majority of electors who failed to represent the will of the electorate. This is not a semantic quibble. Bush's claim that he seeks re-election is a dagger pointed at the heart of representative government. JERRY P. THOMAS

Dana Point, Calif.

■ Three cheers for Susan Jacoby's important April 19 "In Praise of Secularism," calling attention to the Bush Administration's assault on the separation of church and state. However, I was disappointed to see Christian Scientists lumped together with radical Islamic plane hijackers as examples of religions that do harm. The suggestion that Christian Science parents would allow their child to die in adherence to religious doctrine is uninformed. The Christian Science church provides members clear guidelines on adherence to public health policies and encourages them to consult with medical practitioners when necessary. TODD HERZER

CORRECTIONS

■ Last week's editorial "The Horror of Abu Ghraib" mentioned three detainees who died in US custody in Afghanistan. US military doctors termed two, not three, of the deaths "homicide." The three deaths are still under investigation

Contrary to David Graeber's April 19 "Lying in Wait," John Timoney has not been put in charge of security for this summer's Democratic National Convention in Boston.

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

straight progressives were afraid to stand up against the real political dynamics that fed this growing monster in America, they would continue to lose.

The right wing wasn't afraid of the gays; it loved them. From Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" crusade in the 1970s to Jerry Falwell's "love the sinner, hate the sin" attacks in the 1980s, it saw millions of dollars and millions of votes flowing to this new Republican coalition. By 1994 Congressman Newt Gingrich, a man who left his cancer-stricken wife to wed a younger woman, finally brought a minority party that was unable to win more than six states in 1964 to the pinnacle of power. It was "identity politics" (the calculated appeal to fear of homosexuals, fear of women's emancipation, fear of blacks, period) that gave the Republicans their electoral victories and put Bush I and II into the White House. While the GE types may have had domination of the world's economic resources as their primary agenda item, they knew that to gain control of the government and its military, they needed the right-wing Christian fundamentalists. They were into "identity politics" in a big way.

The little church ladies who gave their money and their votes to one right-wing candidate after another were not likely to be moved by pleas on behalf of the Enrons of the world. But tell them homosexuals were planning to steal their children with their proselytizing "lifestyle" and same-sex marriage ceremonies, and the checkbooks flew open.

Twenty years after my little boycott, some of my straight friends have finally begun to come to their senses about the right wing in America. Here in Vermont, after the state supreme court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage rights and Governor Howard Dean signed the civil union bill in 2000, right-wingers were inspired to try to take over one of the few state governments they had not yet monopolized. Did they care about gays getting married? Not really. The religious zealots were undoubtedly sincere in their loathing, but as on the national stage, the real powers behind the effort to "take back Vermont" were Republicans furious that progressives had made significant advances in all areas of state government. They really wanted to roll back environmental laws like Act 250, which had slowed down developers' dreams of paving over the state in asphalt, or repeal educational reforms like Act 60, which for the first time made rich ski towns pay into poor towns' school budgets. The right wing figured that the victory for civil unions presented a ripe opportunity to accomplish these things. But lo and behold, who was in there fighting for civil unions and against the right wing? My straight progressive married friends. And they won.

In 2000 in Vermont, for the first time, they saw what that Reagan/Falwell coalition was really about. They realized that "their" issues and "gay" issues were all of a piece where the right was concerned—and that, therefore, a solid strategy for countering the right wing's opportunistic coalition required bold support for the "identity politics agenda." The right wing withered in Vermont after its enormous defeat.

That lesson is now spreading across the country, as more and more heterosexuals stand up for gay marriage. Whether it's Mayor Gavin Newsom in San Francisco or Mayor Jason West in New Paltz, New York, now possibly facing jail for marrying gays, they realize that a victory for gay and lesbian rights is a defeat for the right wing. Meanwhile, in Massachusetts, straight progressives are organizing a massive campaign against the reactionary effort to overturn the state supreme court's decision that gay people have the same rights as straight people when it comes to marriage. The spectacle of hundreds of gay people marrying in Massachusetts this summer will obviously increase the fundraising from the church ladies. However, if reactionaries are stopped short, as they were in Vermont, that will be a major setback for the cultural right. Without victories, those church ladies will ultimately close their checkbooks, and Cheney, Rove, Bush and their corporate elite friends will have to come up with a new electoral strategy.

My straight progressive friends, who did not boycott my civil union with my partner, David, last summer in Vermont, have a new recipe for defeating the right wing in America. JOHN SCAGLIOTTI

John Scagliotti, Emmy Award–winning producer of Before Stonewall *and the creator of* In the Life, *PBS's gay and lesbian TV series, is the administrator of the Kopkind Colony, a journalists' summer camp project in Vermont open to people of all sexual identities.*

A Nation of WASPs?

In the past it was not difficult to discern the difference between xenophobia and racism. But a Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington, has muddied the waters. In an article for the magazine he helped to found, *Foreign Policy*, Huntington has conflated the two ugly sentiments. He dislikes all Spanish-speaking people and their descendants in the United States. He finds Mexicans to be the worst, although he doesn't like Cubans either. He writes that Cubans ruined Miami and Mexicans have ruined a large part of the rest of the country. In his view, the growing Latino population will divide the United States into two separate nations, one Latino and the other white. Well, not all white; there are Asians, and he doesn't care for them either. But Harvard professors are different from old-fashioned bigots; they hide their bigotry in xenophobia.

Nativists like Huntington think immigrants are a danger to the future of our country. On the contrary, they are perhaps the only solution to human destiny, which is to grow old and then die. As any actuary can tell the nativists, America is about to run out of the one thing neither xenophobia nor racism can provide: youth. There is no imaginable solution to the problem now other than immigration. The great majority of immigrants are young, including many women in their childbearing years. They are the youth of the world, to borrow a phrase from Rousseau.

What these immigrants will bring to the United States, to the lives of my great-grandchildren and yours, depends in part on the success or failure of the crude nativist arguments of people like Huntington. If they succeed, the United States will wither, becoming a crone among nations. If those who love this country despite its political and social flaws succeed, immigrants and their children and grandchildren and all the generations that follow will enrich the mind as well as the strong back of the United States.

Huntington complains of the poor performance of Mexican

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COMMENT

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Ralph da Costa Nunez

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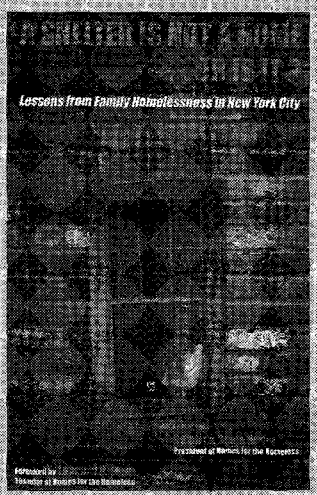

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and Mexican-American children in school, citing the high dropout rate. He does not mention the success of descendants of Spanish-speakers: the philosophers, attorneys practicing before the Supreme Court, medical doctors and researchers, poets, playwrights, heads of businesses large and small and countless teachers and scholars, as well as cooks, house painters, truck drivers and construction workers; in short, a repetition of the experience of immigrants over the centuries.

There *is* a danger in immigration, but it is not cultural or racial, as Huntington argues. It begins in the suffering of undocumented people limited to work that does not use the skills of mind they could contribute to society. It continues in the neighborhoods and the schools, where the children of immigrants, particularly Latinos, are cheated of the kind of education that can make them most useful to the nation. This failure of society not only steals possibility from the immigrants and their descendants but from the future of us all.

Huntington bemoans the fact that bilingualism will increase because of immigration from Latin America, as if it were a catastrophe. It is rather a gift. As Europeans say, to speak more than one language is to be civilized. Unfortunately, most Latinos over time will lose some or all of their Spanish. It is the grandmothers who teach the language of the old country, and when there are no grandmothers who speak the ancestral language, it fades.

Huntington complains bitterly that Latino immigrants lack the language skills and understanding of America of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, but his work raises questions about the familiarity of Harvard professors with English and history. The first sentence of his article reads: "America was created by 17th- and 18th-century settlers who were overwhelmingly white, British, and Protestant." Had he been an immigrant from another part of America, he would have known enough Spanish to understand the meaning of the verb "create," and he would have attributed the creation of America to God or Nature, not to the seventeenth-century British. In fact, there were no British until 1707, only Englishmen. And he might have thought to consult the *Oxford English Dictionary* on the meaning of "overwhelmingly," which has imperialistic connotations in this context. Professor Huntington, knight errant in defense of the English language, has struck a blow against the thing he claims to love.

There is also a problem in his understanding of democracy. It was a Greek invention, and the Greeks welcomed newcomers, thinking they might be gods. We should do the same, if for no other reason than to preserve the idea of democracy. To emigrate is a political decision, a revolution in the very depths of one's soul. Immigrants arrive politicized, prepared by the act of immigration itself to take part in the *vita activa* of their new country. Their hope knows no limits. The first US soldier to die in the war on Iraq was a Guatemalan immigrant. He was not a US citizen. He did not die for the country of his birth but for the country of his dreams. Huntington may despise such people for their origins, but it makes better moral and political sense to embrace them, for our sake as well as theirs, before the winter of this nation begins. EARL SHORRIS

Earl Shorris received the National Humanities Medal in 2000. His new book, The Life and Times of Mexico, *will be published in August.*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Good War

JOEL BEININ

THE YOM KIPPUR WAR: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East.
By Abraham Rabinovich.
Schocken. 543 pp. $27.50.

THE EVE OF DESTRUCTION: The Untold Story of the Yom Kippur War.
By Howard Blum.
HarperCollins. 350 pp. $25.95.

For the last three and a half years the Israeli army has deployed American-supplied F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, armored Caterpillar bulldozers and Merkava tanks powered by engines made in the USA in an unsuccessful effort to suppress the second Palestinian uprising. According to both Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon, Israel is engaged in a war despite the spectacularly unequal military balance in the conflict. Moreover, Palestinian civilians and the infrastructure of Palestinian society have been its principal victims. Almost all of the 2,886 Palestinian fatalities since September 2000 have been civilians, about eighty of them "collateral damage" to 230 extrajudicial assassinations, which are themselves violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In the same period there have been 950 Israeli fatalities, 672 of them civilians.

The typical pattern for the first several weeks of the intifada was that Palestinian civilians engaged in peaceful protest marches. Toward the end of the protests, youths taunted and threw stones at Israeli troops. The soldiers fired on stone-throwers and non-stone-throwers alike, rapidly escalating their responses to all demonstrations against over thirty years of occupation in accord with previously devised plans. Palestinian police, fearing they would be discredited if they remained passive, eventually returned fire using the rifles they were issued in accordance with the Oslo agreements. Secular and Islamist Palestinian factions revitalized their military wings. As it became clear that they were hopelessly outmatched by Israel's military force, they resorted to the strategically and morally catastrophic deployment of suicide bombers, targeting civilians.

The conduct of the Israeli army in the second intifada, in sharp contrast to its prevailing image, has been singularly unheroic. Its tactics have been condemned by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and even the State Department's annual report on human rights. This less than admirable performance forms the context for a spate of new books celebrating a better era for Israel's armed forces, when victories were gained fighting armies, not a civilian population resisting occupation and seeking national self-determination.

First there was Michael Oren's *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, chronicling the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Though widely acclaimed by mainstream reviewers as a definitive account of the war, Oren's book was aptly described by the tireless Norman Finkelstein as "Abba Eban with Footnotes"—a reference to Eban's eloquent but factually challenged speech at the UN General Assembly justifying Israel's pre-emptive strike of June 1967. While Oren's book is a serious work of scholarship, it essentially restates the traditional Israeli account of the war as a defensive strike waged against belligerent Arab states seeking to "throw Israel into the sea." Oren does not adequately address three arguments that challenge this view. First, according to interviews with former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan conducted in 1976 and 1977, which were kept secret for many years but published well before Oren's book, Israel had been intentionally provoking Syria since 1948 in order to establish sovereignty over the demilitarized zones on their common border. Second,

The new intifada has fed a wave of nostalgia for the days when Israel fought traditional armies rather than a guerrilla resistance.

Joel Beinin is professor of Middle East history at Stanford University and a member of the editorial committee of Middle East Report.

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according to the evaluation of several different intelligence agencies and the Israeli general staff, Israel did not face an existential danger in 1967 and could expect an easy victory. Third, Israel chose war because, as Shimon Peres wrote in the pro–Labor Party daily, *Davar*, its leaders did not want to negotiate over Israel's borders or the question of Palestinian refugees. The second of these matters remains off the table as far as Israel is concerned.

Now we have accounts of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war by two journalists, Abraham Rabinovich and Howard Blum. On October 6 Egypt and Syria dramatically launched a successful surprise attack against Israel in an effort to recover their territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In the Jewish calendar this day corresponded to Yom Kippur; in the Muslim calendar it fell during the month of Ramadan. Thus, in Israeli parlance this round of the conflict is known as the Yom Kippur War, while in the Arab world it is known as the Ramadan War. These terms reflect the increasing strength of politicized religion on both sides of the conflict since the early 1970s. In their initial thrusts, the Arab armies performed far better than Israeli military intelligence analysts thought possible. Egyptian forces crossed to the east bank of the Suez Canal and recaptured part of the Sinai Peninsula. After several days of ineptitude and disarray, Israel successfully counterattacked and occupied a large swath of territory on the west bank of the canal, cutting off the Egyptian Third Army. This inconclusive military outcome on the Egyptian front established the basis for the political negotiations that followed the war. The Syrians made impressive advances on the Golan Heights, and many Israeli leaders, including Moshe Dayan, feared that Syria would invade Israel proper. But the Syrian offensive stalled and was eventually driven back.

The archives of the Israeli, US, British and Russian governments have just been opened for this period, too late for either Rabinovich or Blum to have used them. Therefore, their books do not have as solid a documentary basis as Oren's work. They rely heavily on inherently contradictory and self-serving interviews and memoirs. Rabinovich draws extensively on the report of the Agranat Commission, which investigated Israel's military "lapse"—the failure to anticipate the Arab attack and to read the available intelligence properly. But important sections of that report are still classified, and the Agranat Commission avoided placing responsibility on political figures. It limited its scope of inquiry to military matters narrowly construed. As Rabinovich and Blum apparently decided in advance the stories they wanted to tell before beginning to write, lack of authoritative evidence was no deterrent to their endeavors. Consequently, their narratives are, for the most part, predictable.

Rabinovich's *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East* is by far the more serious of the two books. As one might expect from a former reporter for the *Jerusalem Post*, the book is highly Israel-centered. Perhaps I betray my training as a professional historian by confessing that I am repeatedly astounded by the audacity of those who presume to write credibly about the Arab-Israeli conflict without knowing both Hebrew and Arabic. Rabinovich's lack of Arabic means that he has no access to the Arabic press and memoirs of the war, except for items translated into Hebrew or English. They would present a rather different perspective than the Hebrew press and memoirs of Israeli military and political figures, which are among his principal sources. Lack of knowledge of Arabic also results in basic journalistic errors, like rendering the name of Egyptian Gen. Fuad Huwaydi as Havidi, following a report in the Hebrew daily *Ma'ariv*. (Hebrew often uses a "v" where Arabic employs a "w," and in both Hebrew and Arabic, vowels are usually not transcribed.)

Despite Israel's massive strategic superiority over the Arabs, the 1973 war is still depicted as a struggle of David and Goliath.

Rabinovich also has a weak grasp of Arab history. He claims that Egypt's crossing of the Suez Canal was an unprecedented feat of Arab arms since Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187. Saladin was a Kurd, and many of his soldiers were not Arabs. An Egyptian Mamluk army defeated the Mongols in Palestine in 1260—a legendary battle in the Egyptian national imagination. The sixteenth-century naval exploits of the Tunisian-based Khayr al-Din Barbarossa and other corsairs are legendary. The armies of the Egyptian Pasha, Mehmed Ali, conquered much of what is now Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon in the 1830s, and in 1839 reached far into the Anatolian Peninsula. So, despite Rabinovich's criticisms of the Israeli general staff for underestimating Arab military capabilities in 1973, he himself is a victim of the same historical shortsightedness that led to this miscalculation.

The Yom Kippur War offers us numerous vignettes of Israeli soldiers of various ranks and very effectively humanizes Israel's armed forces, especially the tank corps, which bore the brunt of the fighting. In contrast, the only substantial representation of an Arab soldier in the field is that of Egyptian Sgt. Mahmud Nadeh, using Hebrew excerpts from his diary published in the daily *Yediot Aharonot*. The book is profusely illustrated, but only three of the photos portray Arabs: two of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, a "good Arab" who signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, and one of Abdel Ghani el-Gamasy, the Egyptian chief of operations.

All of the predictable stereotypes about the Arab-Israeli conflict are rehearsed. Despite what we now know of US and Israeli intelligence estimates predicting an easy Israeli victory in the 1967 war, the massing of Arab armies on Israel's borders in 1967 "appeared to pose an existential threat." Despite the overwhelming strategic superiority confirmed by the outcome of that war, the Arab-Israeli conflict remains a struggle of David and Goliath; the overall ratio of Arab to Israeli forces in 1973 was 3:1. In 1973 Israel faced the "prospect of national annihilation." The presence of Moroccan and Iraqi units on the Golan Heights means that the 1973 war was between Israel and the entire Arab world. Rabinovich misses no opportunity to note that a soldier or his parents are Holocaust survivors.

Israeli soldiers and officers are depicted throughout as heroic, self-sacrificing, magnanimous, professional and highly motivated. In fact, the Israeli army was led by senior officers whose vision was clouded by arrogance and contempt for Arab military capacity and whose incompetence verged on criminal. Chief of Staff Dado Elazar thought that 100 Israeli tanks facing Syria's 800 on the Golan Heights "ought to be enough." The commander of the southern front, Gen. Shmuel Gonen, and chief of military intelligence, Meir Zeira, come off as particularly incompetent. Nonetheless, Israel won the war thanks to the qualities of its soldiers and midlevel officers.

To his credit, Rabinovich clearly explains that his purpose in writing his book is to capture the epic quality of the war and to understand it as a coherent narrative. Those objectives lead directly to the book's most salient flaws. Portraying war as an epic tips the story in the direction of the heroic feats of the victor. And war is, as Joseph Heller's exemplary novel

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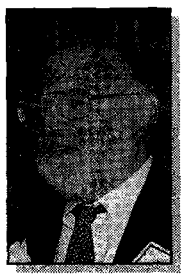

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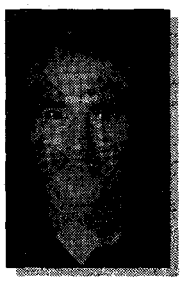

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Catch-22 attests, not a coherent experience. Combat is often shaped by confusion on the battlefield, failure to receive or carry out orders, unanticipated circumstances of all sorts, accidents and personality quirks. Ultimately, as happened in 1973, the strategically stronger side generally prevails. Therefore, it should be no surprise that despite the initial successes of the Arab side, Israel was the military victor and could easily have gone on to occupy Cairo and Damascus had a cease-fire not been imposed.

The most important story of the 1973 war is in the political realm—precisely the arena Rabinovich underplays. It was a war that did not have to happen—an argument whose elements Rabinovich presents only briefly. Nonetheless, he unobtrusively undermines Israel's claim that security needs compelled it to annex some of the territory it conquered in 1967, noting that "Israel lost this early warning buffer after the Six Day War since the Egyptian and Syrian armies were drawn up in strength only a few hundred yards from the new Israeli lines inside their territory." That is to say, the territories conquered in 1967 were a security liability, not a security asset. Likewise, the stunning victory of 1967 undermined Israel's security. It led Israelis to become arrogant and flabby and to underestimate Arab capabilities. "Israel's tank corps was a particular victim of the victory syndrome."

Anwar Sadat first offered to negotiate with Israel on the basis of land-for-peace in February 1971, only months after assuming power. Rabinovich acknowledges that Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir stubbornly refused to consider evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for a non-belligerency agreement with Egypt. He quotes Deputy Prime Minister Yisrael Galili's correct assessment that the danger of war "stemmed from Israel's unwillingness to withdraw to the 1967 borders."

Rabinovich downplays Sadat's willingness to negotiate because Israel was unwilling to accept his terms. Among the reasons that Golda Meir and her colleagues felt no pressure to consider Egypt's overtures seriously is that President Nixon's Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, was too busy with Vietnam and Watergate to pay attention to the Middle East. Moreover, despite UN Security Council Resolution 242's enunciation of the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war," Kissinger thought Egypt should accept Israel's terms. Kissinger's "realpolitik" meant a US policy of exerting little or no pressure on Israel to conform to the international consensus on Resolution 242.

Only after the 1973 war began did Kissinger finally understand Sadat's goals. Nonetheless, both Nixon and Kissinger supported Israel's war objectives. Washington resupplied Israel with massive quantities of weaponry, enabling a successful counterattack on the Egyptian front. Kissinger urged the Israelis to occupy Damascus and delayed calling for a cease-fire at the UN until the Egyptian Third Army was cut off.

Rabinovich undermines his own invocation of the existential danger facing Israel and his recapitulation of the David and Goliath story by his correct statement that Sadat wanted a short war with a limited political goal. The Egyptian president sought to kick-start negotiations to achieve an agreement with Israel based on the land-for-peace formula he had proposed in 1971. Sadat believed, correctly it turned out, that if Egypt did no more than successfully cross the Suez Canal and shatter the myth of the invincibility of the Israeli army, the United States would be compelled to intervene and mediate between the two parties. This was the opening gambit in Sadat's broader strategy of abandoning the Soviet camp and reorienting Egypt toward the United States, which he believed held "99 percent of the cards."

Howard Blum's book is high kitsch, owing more to the Leon Uris school of Israeli history than to any recognized form of scholarship.

The initial battle plan, devised with Soviet assistance, called for Egyptian forces to cross the canal and occupy a beachhead only several miles into the Sinai. Egypt's armor and infantry would remain under the cover of Soviet-supplied SAM missiles, for which the Israeli air force had no counter. After the initial success of the crossing on a scale far greater than he had hoped for, Sadat abandoned caution and ordered his generals to push beyond the SAM umbrella. This strategic blunder allowed the Israeli air force to decimate Egypt's armor and led to its ultimate military defeat.

Although the story has circulated in Israel previously, American readers may be surprised by Rabinovich's account of King Hussein's secret visit to Golda Meir on September 25. (Blum offers essentially the same version of the event.) At a Mossad safehouse in Herzliya, Hussein warned that Syria was preparing for war and that it was likely that both Syria and Egypt would attack Israel. This is but one of the many instances of Jordanian-Israeli collaboration over a period of many decades documented by Oxford historian Avi Shlaim. Israeli military intelligence refused to believe the King despite the existence of considerable corroborating intelligence. Apparently, not all the Arabs were arrayed against Israel.

English readers may also be surprised by Rabinovich's and Blum's accounts of intelligence from 1969 on, provided to Israel by a Mossad agent known as "the In-Law." He turns out to have been Ashraf Marwan, the son-in-law of the previous Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser. However, Israeli military intelligence ignored information about the imminence of the 1973 war even from such a highly placed source until it was too late.

Invocation of the idealized images that so often substitute for analysis in discussions of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict, de-emphasis of the political prelude to the war and a focus on the pathos of the battle all lead Rabinovich to a flawed conclusion: Israel's victory came from "the deepest layers of the nation's being and from basic military skills that compensated for the grave errors of the leadership." American support for Israel was far more important to the outcome of the war than Rabinovich acknowledges. Not only did the Nixon Administration undertake an unprecedented airlift of military equipment in the midst of the war and provide diplomatic backing to Israel by delaying a call for a cease-fire; it even threatened to use nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union should it support Egypt in a similar fashion. In addition, Israel maintained a fundamental strategic superiority over all its Arab neighbors combined, despite their numerical superiority. These factors deserve far more prominence as explanations of the outcome of the war than Rabinovich grants.

If Abraham Rabinovich offers us an account of the 1973 war in which romantic stereotypes woven through reasonable political and military reportage ultimately lead to an unrealistic conclusion, Howard Blum's *The Eve of Destruction: The Untold Story of the Yom Kippur War* is high kitsch that owes more to the Leon Uris school of Israeli history than to any recognized form of scholarship. In Blum's historical mythology, contemporary Israel is not the result of a largely secular Zionist rebellion against religious orthodoxy but, "after two thousand years of struggle, [the fulfillment of]

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a once improbable biblical prophecy."

Blum's saga is bookended by accounts of an attempted suicide bombing during the second intifada, which is, of course, "fierce and primitive." F-16 attacks on residential dwellings, which go unmentioned, are no doubt "gentle and civilized." The bombing is prevented by Shabtai Brill, an intelligence officer who was discredited and victimized because he went outside the chain of command in an effort to warn his superiors of the impending war.

A parallel and even more schmaltzy frame for Blum's fantasy war is the love story of Nati and Yossi Ben Hanan. Yossi was a tank commander who became internationally famous as "the chosen image of a chosen people," as Blum so modestly puts it, after he graced the cover of *Life* following the 1967 war. Nati and Yossi are "our new Davids, our new Sarahs." The description of their honeymoon voyage on a third-class train in India is a predictable Orientalist travelogue. Among the saris, eunuchs, beggars, conjurers, puppeteers and a cobra charmer, "there was always noise, a grueling cacophony of people and animals, of hectoring voices and low pitched sobbing. And the smells, a high noxious mix of urine, spices, heat, curry, and unwashed bodies, the odor thick and pervasive, pressing constantly."

Yossi and Nati abandon their honeymoon so that he can join his tank unit fighting on the Golan Heights. At that point, although she was a lieutenant before her marriage, Nati fades into the background. This may be just as well, because many women and not a few men might feel uncomfortable with the hyper-macho sexual banter among the tank officers on the Golan Heights.

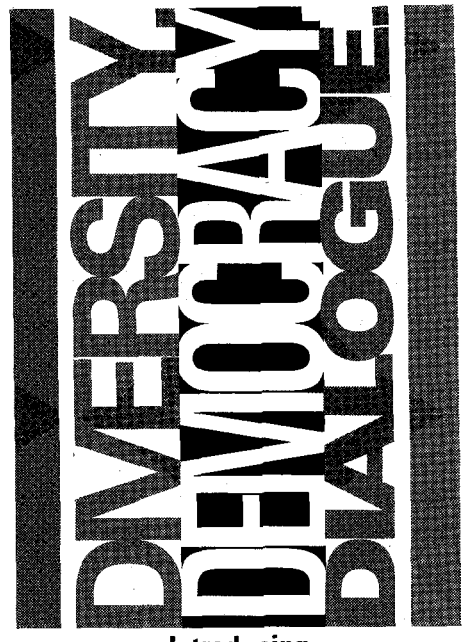
Blum is so immersed in kitsch that he misses elementary aspects of the 1973 war. The Israeli army was not "brilliantly led," as he asserts. Rather, as Rabinovich makes clear, the arrogance born of easy victory in 1967 led the Israeli high command to underestimate its opponents and ignore intelligence contradicting its preconceived understanding of the strategic situation. The Bush Administration's misadventures in Iraq reconfirm how grave the consequences of such arrogance can be.

Reluctance to report weaknesses of the Israeli army also leads Blum to offer a mistaken account of Israel's October 9 "successful bombing of the Syrian Defense Ministry." According to Rabinovich, "the damage to the buildings in Damascus had been moderate" and "the Syrian military hierarchy was in underground war rooms elsewhere." Moreover, it was not the Defense Ministry but the general staff headquarters that was bombed. The main effect of the air raid, according to Rabinovich, was deterrent: It ended the Frog missile attacks on Israel.

Blum's misrepresentations extend to confusion about the location of Israel's borders. When the Egyptian army enters the Sinai Peninsula, sovereign territory of Egypt occupied by Israel, it is "on Israeli soil." Similarly, when the Syrian army retakes part of the Golan Heights, its internationally recognized territory, it has "entered Israel." There is also constant confusion about whether the Arab forces are fighting "Israelis" or "Jews." To be sure, the Arabs themselves are often imprecise on this matter, but the current promiscuous accusations of a worldwide rise in anti-Semitism suggest the need to be clear about this.

Blum's failure is therefore obvious and glaring. He is either lost in a dream or fundamentally ignorant about the past and present state of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such illusory conceptions of the conflict continue to inform US public policy and the understanding of many Americans, especially Jews who, rather bizarrely in light of current events, feel Israel is their security blanket and evangelical Protestants (apparently including President Bush and others in his Administration) who see it as the harbinger of the Second Coming. Rabinovich is more realistic than Blum, but perhaps therefore more seductive. Even though Rabinovich ultimately succumbs to the same romanticization as Blum, albeit on a less extravagant scale, his version of the 1973 war may well receive the kind of canonical status that Michael Oren's account of the 1967 war is on the way to achieving.

A better way to think about the 1973 war might begin with the proposition stated earlier, that it was a war that did not have to happen. As is the case with other important revisions to the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, an Israeli historian, Yoram Meital, has laid the groundwork for this argument in his dense but well-researched *Egypt's Struggle for Peace: Continuity and Change, 1967–1977*. Unlike Rabinovich and Blum, Meital knows Arabic, and Egypt, well. This does not make Meital a knee-jerk, left-wing wimp. In fact, he served as a mentor to the far-from-dovish former defense minister Yitzhak Mordechai, who ran unsuccessfully for the Israeli prime ministership in 1999. But Meital respects Egypt, its people and its culture. This is not only an essential starting point for understanding the 1973 war. It is also an essential starting point for a real Arab-Israeli peace process. ■



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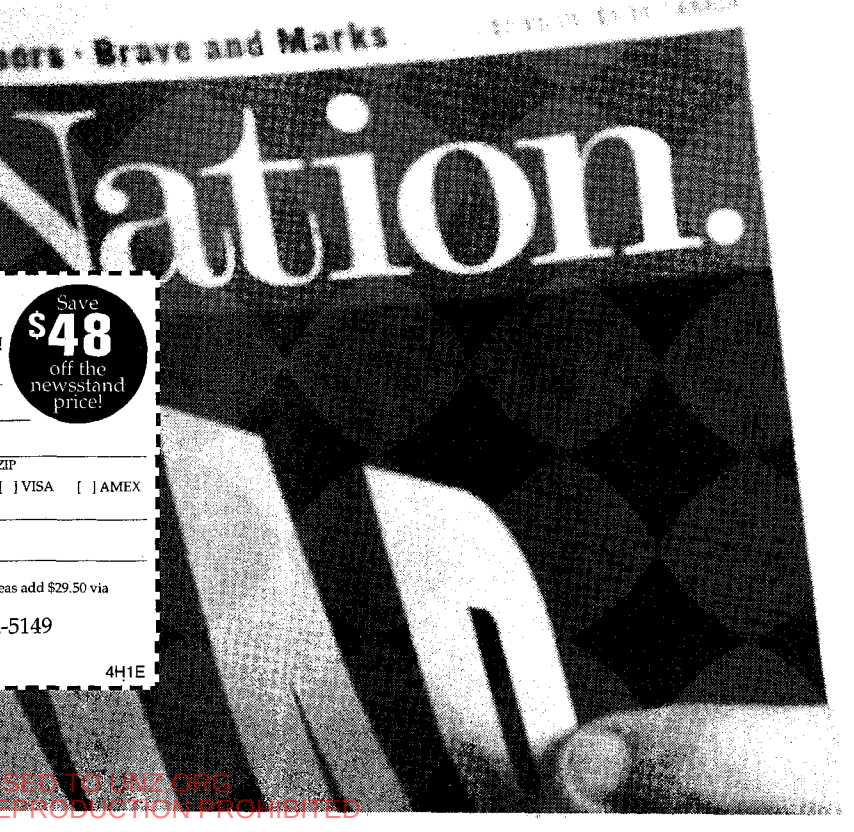

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Darkness Visible

LEXI RUDNITSKY

OCTOBER. By Louise Glück. Sarabande. 20 pp. $8.95.

Shortly after the first anniversary of September 11, when *The New Yorker* had published a slew of poems memorializing the events of that day—Galway Kinnell's "When the Towers Fell" and Charles Simic's "Late September," to name a few—Louise Glück's poem "October" appeared in the magazine's pages. Laid out in four long columns across two full pages of the magazine, the format recalled the imposing form of the twin towers. Its allusions to "terror," "violence" and "death" seemed to invoke September 11, as did its repeated questions about physical survival: "didn't he heal," "wasn't my body/rescued," "wasn't it safe," "wasn't the earth/safe," the speaker persistently asks. But unlike the poems that describe September 11 in graphic detail, this poem is about the aftermath of trauma: not September but October, not 2001 but a year later, not violence but, as Glück twice reminds us, "after violence." The poem conveys a powerful nostalgia for "everything that was taken away." "The eye gets used to disappearances," Glück writes, immediately conjuring New York's dramatically reduced skyline.

But now, published as a handsome if austere chapbook, the poem can be understood on its own terms. *October* is Glück's first book since being anointed America's Poet Laureate in October 2003, and its diminutive size gives it a sense of intimacy and humility that is strangely at odds with her new public position. The poem is an elegy of sorts, but not one tied to September 11 in the way, say, Kinnell's poem seems to be. There is no "blackened fire," no "burning alive," no "sifting for bodies." Instead, we find Glück's spare language and her usual tropes: the garden, the seasons, the earth, the sun and the moon.

Glück has said about writing poetry, "No process I can name so completely defeats the authority of event." What interests her is not how the poet "transcribes" actual occurrences but how she "transforms" them into art. Her poems, she insists, originate in language, not occasions:

> For me, all poems begin in some fragment of motivating language—the task of writing a poem is the search for context. Other imaginations begin, I believe, in the actual, in the world, in some concrete thing which examination endows with significance.... My own work begins at the opposite end, at the end, literally, at illumination, which has then to be traced back to some source in the world.

An extended meditation on the poet's changing relationship to language, *October* attempts to do just this: to locate its own sources of illumination—and darkness. For it is a "cold light" of an increasingly "darker" hue that illuminates this poem: "The light has changed," she explains. "This is the light of autumn, not the light of spring./ The light of autumn: *you will not be spared*." *October* is an *ars poetica*, charting Glück's poetic development from a bookish girl ("I was young here. Riding/the subway with my small book/as though to defend myself against//this same world") through her many silences ("silenced," "silence," "silent," "not speaking," "unspeakable") to her present state as mature poet ("Bitter or weary, it is hard to say"). But it is from her stance as seasoned bard that she can look back—with a touch of irony—on her earlier work: "I can finally say/*long ago*; it gives me considerable pleasure." Part of this pleasure, as the enjambed lines suggest, stems from the mere fact of overcoming silence.

This is not to imply that the poem is autobiographical in any conventional sense: It does not provide a chronological narrative of growth and fulfillment. Just as Glück's poems are not "about" events per se, they are not "about" private experience. "Personal circumstance may prompt art," Glück has written, "but the actual making of art is a revenge on circumstance." *October* is only autobiographical in the sense that, at least according to Glück, all poems must be: "Poems *are* autobiography, but divested of the trappings of chronology and comment, the metronomic alternation of anecdote and response." That is, poems map a highly associative inward terrain that may or may not correlate to an external reality.

Neither could *October* be mistaken for a confessional poem: It is far too oblique, perhaps even, to use a word often used to describe Glück's work, "mystical." Glück has written extensively on the problems of reading and writing confessional poetry, most lucidly in her essay "Against Sincerity." Far from tell-all disclosure, *October* communicates as much through what it omits as through what it includes. Glück praises this minimalist aesthetic in others and reveals a penchant for it in her own work: "I love what is implicit or present in outline, that which summons (as opposed to imposes) thought. I love white space, love the telling omission, love lacunae, and find oddly depressing that which seems to have left out nothing."

A self-conscious and reflective poem that traces the trajectory of her writing life, *October* is perhaps best described as a portrait of the artist. If in her second book, *The House on Marshland*, she promises (with considerable irony) to "begin/the great poems of my middle period," then here she appears to mark the end of that period. *October* was published a year before her appointment as Poet Laureate. But by complicating the relationship between language and events, the poem eerily prefigured the dilemmas she would face in assuming such a public role. "To my surprise I didn't hesitate," Glück told the *Washington Post* after accepting the position, "even though I can't say I was unambivalently delighted. I have very little taste for public forums."

Born in New York City and raised in an affluent Long Island community, Louise Glück grew up in a family in which everyone felt authorized to complete each other's thoughts. She says she began writing because "I wanted to finish my own sentences." Her ambitious, Wellesley-educated mother saw to it that 3-year-old Louise was well versed in Greek mythology—a foundation that shows up throughout Glück's *oeuvre*—and encouraged her daughter at every turn to pursue her vocation.

As an adolescent who, by her own account, "had great resources of will and no self," Glück developed a severe case of anorexia. In her senior year of high school, she entered psychoanalysis and was taken out of school. "For the next seven years," she reports, "analysis was what I did with my time and with my mind." But during that time she also attended Columbia University, where she studied with Stanley Kunitz—"the first human being by whom I felt entirely heard."

Glück's career has not exactly been fast-paced. She published *Firstborn*, her first book, in 1968, at the age of 25. *The House on Marshland* did not come until 1975, a gap in years that has not been uncommon in her writing life. Such dry spells, in fact, are a conscious subject of *October*, whose short

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lines teeter on the brink of white space and whose very language exists "in anticipation of silence." Glück writes: "I have had to get through extended silences. By silences I mean periods, sometimes two years in duration, during which I have written nothing. Not written badly, written nothing."

After *Marshland*, Glück began publishing at five-year intervals: *Descending Figure* (1980), *The Triumph of Achilles* (1985) and *Ararat* (1990). Her early books, particularly the first four, which have now been collected in a single volume, use natural motifs to explore what she elsewhere calls "the great human subjects: time which breeds loss, desire, the world's beauty." ("What others found in art,/I found in nature. What others found/in human love, I found in nature," she reminds us in *October*.)

An unadorned syntax and diction characterize her work from its first incarnation:

> From the beginning I preferred the simplest vocabulary. What fascinated me were the possibilities of context. What I responded to, on the page, was the way a poem could liberate, by means of a word's setting, through subtleties of timing, of pacing, that word's full and surprising range of meaning. It seemed to me that simple language best suited this enterprise; such language, in being generic, is likely to contain the greatest and most dramatic variety of meaning within individual words.

Like her earlier work, the poems in *Ararat* are built on such stark language, but they possess a more confessional streak, plainly depicting her father's death, her mother's anger, rivalries with her sisters (both the one who survived and the one who died as a baby) and other family melodrama. (Two poems in this volume begin, "In our family…"; three begin with "My mother…," three with "My sister…," one with "My son…," etc.)

But it was the publication of *The Wild Iris* (1992), a radical departure from this confessional experiment, that established Glück as a major contemporary poet. Awarded the Pulitzer Prize, *The Wild Iris* remains her most important work today (though she has since published three other full-length books). This highly symbolic work comprises a series of dialogues between various plants and flowers, the gardener who tends them and a higher spiritual authority. Glück explicitly casts many of the poems as prayers (the first half of the book includes seven poems titled "Matins"; the second half, ten called "Vespers"). Other poems respond to these prayers, often in the form of stern rebukes and warnings: "I gathered you together;/I can erase you/as though you were a draft to be thrown away," the gardener-poet dismissively tells her subjects.

In 1976, a year after her second book came out, Glück published "The Garden," a five-part poem that rewrites the biblical tale of Eden, as a slim fourteen-page chapbook, not unlike *October*. (The poem was later reprinted as part of her third collection.) In this poem, she discovers a motif that perfectly articulates her preoccupation with the inevitability of loss: "From the first," she later admitted, "I wanted to talk about death; also from the first I had an instinctive identification with the abandoned, the widowed, with all figures left behind." In the opening section of "The Garden," the speaker, a highly self-conscious Eve, predicts the Fall: "And then the losses/one after another." She spends the rest of the poem anticipating her own death.

Glück returns to the Garden of Eden in *The Wild Iris*, but this time after its collapse. Written in a ten-week period, the book has the thematic unity and narrative arc that led Helen Vendler to pronounce it "one long poem." In this collection's version of "The Garden," the speaker watches a young couple planting seeds and prophesies their demise: "even here, even at the beginning of love,/her hand leaving his face makes/an image of departure." The poem ends on a bleak note, which reveals more about the jaded speaker than the young woman (presumably herself years earlier) and man she describes: "and they think/they are free to overlook/this sadness."

As the most recent in this lineage of garden poems, *October* both extends and departs from Glück's earlier work. The speaker is no longer the self-aware young woman who can defy "the gods," nor the self-assured gardener-deity who can declare, "I made you"; she speaks instead in a somewhat tentative voice that seems to ask for reassurance. The poem begins with a series of negative questions: "weren't the spring seeds planted," "wasn't the back garden harrowed," etc. Only after twelve such questions does Glück venture her first statements, which are still interrupted by doubt and marked by nostalgia for a previous life in which poetry could create an alternate reality:

> I remember how the earth felt, red and dense,
> in stiff rows, weren't the seeds planted,
> didn't vines climb the south wall
>
> I can't hear your voice
> for the wind's cries, whistling over the bare ground
>
> I no longer care
> what sound it makes
>
> when was I silenced, when did it first seem
> pointless to describe that sound
>
> what it sounds like can't change what it is—

For in this poem, Glück not only laments her fall from grace but also her inability to use writing to "change what…is." (Or, in the parlance of her earlier work, to take "revenge on circumstance.") September 11 may pose a real challenge to this principle, since such a "circumstance" clearly cannot be reversed through language.

Rather than find salvation in images of nature and renewal as she does in so many of her poems, here she concludes: "My friend the earth is bitter;…/I think we must give up/turning to her for affirmation." The poet's vocation is no longer an elevated, romantic one of restoring paradise lost; instead, her job is the far more pedestrian one of describing the world as she sees it: "It is true there is not enough beauty in the world./It is also true that I am not competent to restore it./Neither is there candor, and here I may be of some use." But the world as she sees it is still a strange and beautiful place, and *October* is a strange and beautiful poem. The final line reveals something of the poem's complexity, giving as it takes away, at once holding out a romantic image and cutting through sentimentality: "she is beautiful tonight," Glück writes of the moon, "but when is she not beautiful?" One is tempted to ask the same question of Glück's poetic canon, so vividly recalled—and so strikingly expanded—in this remarkable new book. ■

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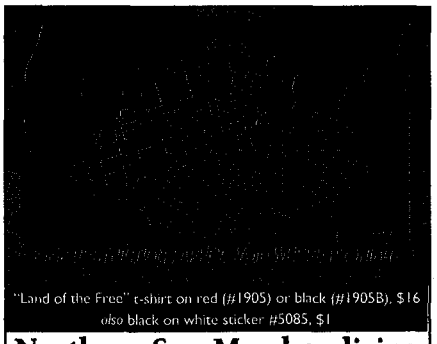

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DIETER ROTH

Three years ago I saw a work by the late Swiss-German artist Dieter Roth that so captivated me that I am determined to write a book just to be able to reproduce it on the jacket. It consists of twenty sausages in assorted sizes, hanging, as in a German butcher shop, in two rows, and is titled *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Works in Twenty Volumes*. Roth had removed the labels from the individual volumes in a matched set of Hegel's *Werke*, and pasted them onto corresponding *Würste*. Much as I admire Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, it was delicious to see its two volumes chopped into bits, stuffed into casings and displayed as what Roth called "literature wurst." It was a witty critique of metaphysics that might have caused even those of my professors who were logical positivists to break into thin, sarcastic smiles.

The only piece by Roth I recall having previously encountered was a cheese book—part of a Fluxus collection that had been acquired by the Getty Foundation from the estate of Jean Brown, an avid enthusiast. A Getty official ushered me into a roomful of largely unclassifiable objects, randomly placed on steel shelving. It is a tribute to Roth that his is the only piece I remember. He had flattened a lump of blue cheese in a plastic folder, clasped in a simple cheap binder. I regret never having seen Roth's legendary 1970 exhibition at the Eugenia Butler Gallery in Los Angeles, which consisted of thirty-seven suitcases in assorted shapes, stuffed with various cheeses, and called *Staple Cheese*—a play on "steeple chase" to which Roth added "(A Race)" in case someone missed the point. In the nature of things, the art was attacked by flies and maggots, and the stench is reported to have been unendurable. I only read about it in *Artforum*, after Roth's death in 1998.

None of these avant-garde creations prepared me for the impressiveness of Roth's *oeuvre* as a whole, on view at MoMA-Queens and PS 1 through June 7. If I'd been asked to imagine what an exhibition of Roth's work would look like, I would have supposed something like that room at the Getty—a jumble of eccentric odds and ends, very few of which would have been seen as works of art before 1960. To my surprise and delight, the author of the cheese book turns out to have been one of the masters of twentieth-century art.

Specialists have employed a German term—*entgrenzen*—to describe Roth's procedure as an artist. It means, roughly, to overcome boundaries. Roth's personality was such that if he encountered a boundary, he would find ways of eliminating it. Fortunately, he came of age in the 1960s, when the spirit of *Entgrenzung* flourished as never before. Later in the decade *Entgrenzung* would spread from art to politics, with the rise of movements challenging boundaries of race, gender and sexuality. But its initial impulses were artistic, and can be traced to Marcel Duchamp, whose "ready-mades" blurred the boundary between works of art and commonplace objects like snow shovels, bottle racks, metal grooming combs and urinals. The next important figure in the history of *Entgrenzung* was John Cage, whose project was erasing the boundary between music, as traditionally defined, and the racket of ordinary life: sirens, coughs, static, whispers, farts. Cage's composition students at the New School—the cadre of the Fluxus movement, led by Cage's visionary protégé George Maciunas—went a step further, seeking to erase the boundary between life and art. By the end of that revolutionary decade, there were few if any boundaries left to overcome in art, or for that matter in life.

I have tended to regard boundary erasure in art as largely a Manhattan contribution—downtown through Cage and uptown through Dr. Suzuki's seminar in Zen at Columbia—but I now see that it was part of the spirit of the times. Roth was a gifted designer with advanced tastes, dedicated at first to Constructivist graphics and concrete poetry, but he had a need for something even more radical, which he found in the work of Jean Tinguely, a fellow Swiss. It has been said that the decade was dramatically inaugurated when, at the opening of Tinguely's exhibition at MoMA in 1960,

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his construction, *Hommage à New York*, self-destructed in the museum's garden with a lot of smoke and clatter. Roth met Tinguely later that year in Basel. "Everything was so rusty and broken and made so much noise," he said of Tinguely's work, likening it to "a paradise that I'd lost."

It's tempting to see Roth's mature work as an effort to re-create that lost infantile paradise by way of detritus, noises and noxious smells. "Paradise Regained" would have been a fitting title for the Roth retrospective in Queens. What one feels is that he turned his entire life into art and created, through his unmatched ludic power, a world of amazing compilations that, like a natural wonder, takes one's breath away.

Like his peers in Fluxus (a term coined by Maciunas), Roth was reacting against the repressive aesthetics of Modernism, a project that received its clearest formulation in Clement Greenberg's 1960 essay "Modernist Painting." Greenberg's view was that each art is defined through the medium specific to its practices, and that under Modernism each art is obliged to purge itself of everything alien to its essence. In painting, this meant the elimination of illusion, since the painted surface is essentially flat. The ultimate aim was to achieve purity. In a sense, Roth's Constructivist works were thoroughly Modernist in impulse, exhibiting the clarity of pure design. What Tinguely opened for him was a paradise of impurity, a world of infinite mess—just what he needed to break out of the ascetic order of Modernism.

In 1967 Roth began to craft what he called "Islands," made out of kitchen scraps, which he nailed to panels painted blue. He was living in Reykjavík at the time, and his inspiration was evidently the Westman Islands—a group of islands off the southern coast of Iceland. Just a few years earlier, the world's newest island, Surtsey, had emerged abruptly in the Westman configuration and become a kind of natural laboratory, in which the coming of life could be observed taking place. Roth doused the food scraps with sour milk or yogurt and poured plaster over the whole. In no time at all, mold formed, decay set in, and the insects that Roth called his "collaborators" arrived. One might say that "Islands" embodied the spirit of Fluxus in visibly decaying into pools and puddles of slime. And for some years thereafter, Roth experimented with use of food as his medium, making prints out of squashed bananas and exploiting milk, sausage, cheese, of course, and above all chocolate, counting in each case on the processes of rot and decay to help life turn into art—and vice versa.

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With his renunciation of beauty as an aesthetic goal, Roth exemplifies what I call the Intractable Avant-Garde. It was one of the marks of Modernist aesthetics to believe that however difficult, however ugly, a work of art will in the end come to be seen as beautiful. The Intractable Avant-Garde rejects this consoling wisdom. Roth once said that the moment something threatens to become beautiful, he stops. He was after a different aesthetic altogether, in *Staple Cheese (A Race)*. Or take his *Tibidabo—24 Hours of Dog Barking*, a recording of a dog pound on Monte Tibidabo in Barcelona. It's hard to imagine anything more obnoxious than the uninterrupted barking of dogs, and sustained exposure does not make it more beautiful. What, then, is the work about? In my view it is about freedom, and the cruelty of keeping dogs penned up.

Decay appears to be a major theme in Roth's work, but he professed to have little interest in it, except insofar as it enabled him to render "the processes of change visible." Consider, for instance, his innovative use of chocolate. Other artists have been interested in chocolate as a subject. Joseph Beuys's first multiple was a block of chocolate evoking the privations of World War II, when chocolate carried the meaning of warmth and subsistence: The US Army D ration was a block of chocolate much like his. In her 1992 work *Gnaw* Janine Antoni used chocolate as a visual metaphor for love. For Roth, by contrast, chocolate was both a subject and a medium in its own right. It connoted mess, and he was not indifferent to its resemblance to excrement (another of his materials), much in the way that Karen Finley smeared herself with chocolate as an emblem of female degradation. His signature work is a bust of himself cast in chocolate. Sometimes he mixed the chocolate with birdseed, so that it might enter the food chain when pecked to nothingness. More spectacularly, he built towers of these chocolate busts, placing five of them at the corners and center of a pane of glass, laying another pane on top of these, placing five more busts on this, until a tower of chocolate heads would reach a certain height. The work is titled *Self Tower* (*Selbstturm*). In one of the inner galleries of the MoMA show, the sweet smell of chocolate forms an olfactory aura around a *Self Tower* built for the occasion. (There is also a tower of self-portraits as lions, also in chocolate.) Inevitably, the weight of the upper shelves pressing down would crush the heads on lower shelves. The glass itself might shatter. "Fluctuations in room temperature, insect activity, and changes in humidity expose the sculptures to a steady process of decay," the catalogue states. "The ravages of time should not be arrested. The towers are left to deteriorate at the artist's own wish."

Readers might jump to the conclusion that the exhibit at MoMA and PS 1 is a depressing affair, a riot of disgusting sensations, not for the faint of heart. In fact, the show is absolutely exhilarating, so full of exuberance, antic invention and the joy of unhampered creativity that it lifts the spirit like little else in recent memory. The first work one encounters at MoMA is a late tapestry portrait of Roth, seated in his studio. He's wearing a cloth cap and jacket and what looks like a neckpiece in the form of a lobster, and seems engaged in a piece of

© THE ESTATE OF DIETER ROTH

***Grosser Teppich* (Large Tapestry), 1984-86**

embroidery himself, spread across his knees. He's surrounded by the jumble of his studio, which increasingly became the motif of his art. The critic Alfred MacAdam said that Roth's work reminded him of Courbet's masterpiece, *The Artist's Studio*, in which the artist portrays himself, seated at the easel, while a model looks over his shoulders and all his subjects surround him.

A collaboration between Roth and the weaver Ingrid Wiener, *Large Tapestry* is a brilliant example of the principle of overcoming the gap between life and art. Tapestry is inherently a collaborative enterprise. As a general rule, the weaver is seated before an upright frame, strung with the vertical warp threads. The artist first prepares a so-called cartoon—a drawing the size of the intended work. This is placed behind the warp, and the artisan, who sees through the warp threads, reproduces the cartoon by means of the colored woof-threads. Instead of drawing a cartoon for *Large Tapestry*, Roth sat behind the threads, in effect turning himself into the cartoon.

Wiener worked on *Large Tapestry* from 1984 to 1986. Needless to say, Roth could not have sat still for two years. This left a great deal up to Wiener, who had to keep changing the tapestry to reflect the changes in her subject. Roth compared her work to that of Homer's Penelope, who unwove the day's work every night. Roth and Wiener did not so much unweave the tapestry as unweave and reweave life, accommodating the changes in the work.

As Roth's life and art became increasingly intertwined, the studio became medium and subject. Behind the *Large Tapestry*, one sees some of his late work, which, whether standing on the floor as sculpture or hanging on the wall as painting, are composites of paint boxes, brushes, cans, bottles, pictures, scraps of writing, drawings, crayons, pencils, frames, a toy ukulele, drafting tools, rulers, smears and slathers of pigment. They are made of what they are about, with little reference to the world outside the studio. It is difficult to think of another *oeuvre* centered quite so solipsistically on the materials and processes of its own production. *Cellar Duet*, for example, is an assemblage of tapes, with music by Roth and his son Björn, together with keyboards, players, recorders, amplifiers, toys, wires, again painted into a messy unity with artists' materials and whatever odds and ends lay ready to hand. In their clotted heterogeneity, these resemble Robert Rauschenberg's work of the 1950s, but obviously the impulses differ.

At PS 1 there is an even more startling example of Roth's transformation of life into art. His studio floor, one of the five large sculptures on display, has been turned on edge and placed against the wall. It becomes, in effect, an immense mural, self-mapping Roth's working space, the varying density of the drips and splatters documenting where the activity of painting was at its most and least intense. In *Solo Scenes*—an installation of 131 stacked video monitors—we see the artist at work, asleep, on the john—a fly's-eye view of Roth padding back and forth, drawing, shaping, going about his life over a period of six months. Another work consists of eight projectors continuously showing slides of houses in Reykjavík, 30,000 in all, each with a different building. Image rapidly succeeds image, the carousels clacking away; and though one could, in a sense, see the whole of Reykjavík if one remained in the room long enough, it would be a curiously empty and even dispiriting experience. The capital is shown without inhabitants, and it is ambiguous as to whether its meaning is that the populace turned its collective back on Roth or Roth simply excluded them from his vision. It is in any case a detached portrait of

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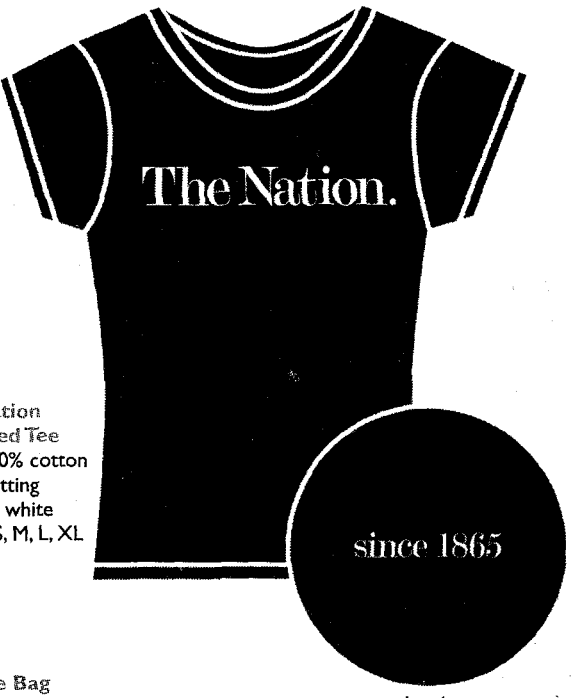

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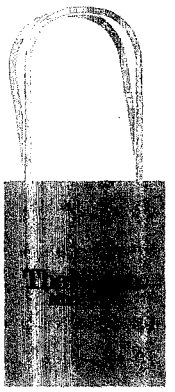

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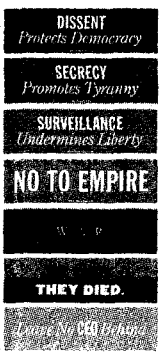

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a city, one building at a time, made by someone who shows no sign of being part of the place—though one of the houses must be where he himself worked and lived, and raised his children with a woman he loved.

PS 1 is also exhibiting what must be Roth's masterpiece—his *Garden Sculpture*, on which he worked off and on from 1968 until 1996. It is a kind of *folie*, which may have begun as a platform, a place to sit outdoors beneath the stars, to which disparate parts were added—ladders, wheels, window panes, lengths of dressed lumber, a whirligig, video monitors, potted plants—in a whole of rickety monumentality. It comes with its own workshop, including power tools and rows of electrical cords, as if Roth had become obsessed by a project whose purpose he had long ago forgotten. It feels like a three-dimensional realization of one of Leonardo's unfathomable drawings—or an outdoor model cobbled up out of scavenged fragments. Kant speaks of art as implying purposefulness without any specific purpose, and this characterizes *Garden Sculpture* to perfection. For some reason, Bosch's title—*Garden of Earthly Delights*—crossed my mind. ■

EVENTS

NATIONAL

URPE Summer Conference

■Right-wing Coup, or Neoliberalism as Usual? Friday, June 4–Monday, June 7. Camp Chinqueka, Bantam, CT. Plenaries include: "Neoliberalism at Home—Right-Wing Escalation?" with Nomi Prins and Doug Henwood; "Global Neoliberalism—Is It Different Under Bush & Post-9/11?" with Ilene Grabel, Gerard Dumenil and Greg Wilpert; "Resistance to Neoliberal Capitalism," with Cyndi Milstein, Mike McGuire and Ashanti Alston; and the David Gordon Lecture: "Communicating Political Economy," by Ann Markusen. Camp Chinqueka, located in the mountains of northwestern Connecticut, provides opportunities for swimming, boating, tennis, basketball, soccer, volleyball and hiking. Children are welcome. Rates: sliding scale. For more information contact URPE at urpe@labornet.org or (413) 577-0806. Visit our website: www.urpe.org.

CHICAGO

Socialism 2004: Ideas That Can Change the World

■ June 17–20, Holiday Inn O'Hare. Over 100 discussions on today's struggles, political theory and more. Speakers include Anthony Arnove, Dennis Brutus, Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St. Clair, Mike Davis, Amy Goodman, Rania Masri, Ahmed Shawki, Sharon Smith. Sponsors: Center for Economic Research and Social Change (*International Socialist Review*), International Socialist Organization (*Socialist Worker*). For full schedule, more information and online registration go to www.socialismconference.org or call (773) 583-8665.

NEW YORK

Stop the 9/11 Cover-Up

■ Widow Ellen Mariani and Attorney Phil Berg on their RICO lawsuit against the US government. Saturday, May 22, Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Drive (between 120th and 122nd St.). Speakers: Scott Ritter on the Iraq war, Sander Hicks on the 9/11 Truth Movement. Doors open 6 PM. www.ny911Truth.org.

A Gathering of The TRIBES

■ Tribes magazine, Tribes Gallery, Fly By Night Press. Literary readings, music, performances now available. *Ovarian Twists: New and Selected Poems* by Anyssa Kim, $14, published by Fly By Night Press, a subsidiary of A Gathering of the Tribes, Inc. *A Gathering of the Tribes* magazine, issue #10, $12.50, is at quality bookstores in your area, or order directly from Tribes, PO Box 20693, Tompkins Square Station, New York, NY 10009, info@tribes.org, www.tribes.org, (212) 674-8262. Every month, Tribes Gallery presents excellent art shows from the perspective of diversity. Call for appointment. Hours 12–6 PM, Tuesday–Sunday. We are at 285 East 3rd Street (between Avenues C and D), 2nd floor.

Rouge Forum

■ Rouge Forum Institute on Education and Society at LeMoyne College in Syracuse, NY, June 24–27. Join us! RougeForum.org.

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■ Stony Brook University. June 10–12. Class is ever more obvious as a force shaping public policy and our lives and life chances. The "How Class Works" conference explores ways in which an explicit recognition of class helps us to understand the social world in which we live. Speakers include: Walden Bello, Medea Benjamin, Congressman David Bonior, Heather Boushey, Gene Bruskin, Jefferson Cowie, Thea Lee, Jack O'Dell, Adolph Reed, Leslie Sklair, Joan Williams and 150 others. Presentations from: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Italy, South Africa, Thailand, Britain and the United States. See full program and register online at www.workingclass.sunysb.edu or call Stony Brook University Office of Conferences and Special Events, (631) 632-6320. Sponsored by the Center for Study of Working Class Life, Michael.Zweig@stonybrook.edu. AA/EOE.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Monday. Rates: $150 for up to 50 words; $225 for up to 75 words. To place an ad, call Leigh at (212) 209-5414.

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BRADENTON/SARASOTA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is meeting monthly. Please call (941) 761-4873 for time and place.

JOIN THE TAMPA BAY AREA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP. Contact ehombord@tampabay.rr.com or call (727) 895-0208.

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STONE MOUNTAIN, GA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming. For further information please call David C. McHenry at (770) 498-1297 or e-mail dmchenry@attbi.com.

CEDAR FALLS/WATERLOO, IA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming. Phone Lou Hellwig at (319) 266-5363 or e-mail shellwig@cfu.net for more information.

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PUZZLE NO. 2942

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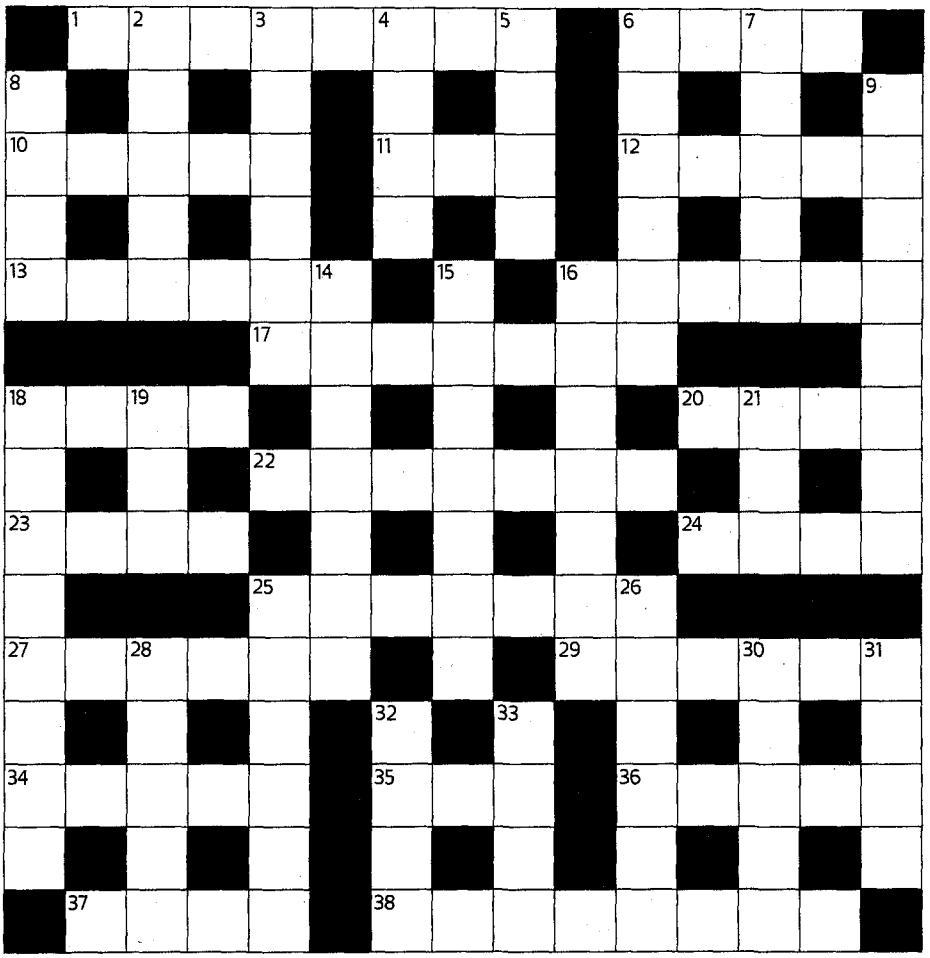

ACROSS

1 and **6** What's the point? To choose a North Dakota health resort? That's the point! You've made a cleanup if it's this way! (5-3-4)

10, 11 and **12** This setter plus! (*aka* Superman—responsible for quite an expedition.) (5,3,5)

13 The peninsula comes to a dead end, but that's what the spectators did when they saw it! (6)

16 Walked, as some say, to see the end of the beginning of 10 so guided. (6)

17 It's the ultimate thing to be indisposed, and to care about it. (4,3)

18, 21 down, **34**, **29** and **4** down Tom-tom? It was the only thing he could play, being across the mountains in the distance. (4,3,5,3,3,4)

20 It might be the case, if you have points to put in it. (4)

22 His meal is prepared by a typical outcast. (7)

23 See 33 down

24 Alban perhaps proved dangerous to those about to go down. (4)

25 High in music, with Charlie's wife in the city. (7)

27 What the high-minded have is perfect, up to a point. (6)

29 and **34** See 18 across

35 Likely to be a very small place to live. (3)

36 Concerning a little stream, it's what one might expect to see on summer TV. (5)

37 As to this, possibly, it's where the philosophic type might be found. (4)

38 A goodbye that implies what you eat is the source of liquid. (8)

DOWN

2 They might get shoved around in life, and on board. (5)

3 Coffin as a wine-container—and in Paris, too! (6)

4 See 18 across

5 Common clothes that don't quite go off. (4)

6 A very short time to appear in the ring, at times—but not first. (6)

7 Make things happen like a face-covering, by the sound of it. (5)

8 and **31** Widespread and wild talk about one of our emblems. (8)

9 There's a point when joking is slipping on a banana peel perhaps? (8)

14 Always in distress, and coming up like crazy with less trouble, however. (7)

15 Discombobulate, with a loud cap on a clumsy oaf. (7)

16 One who accompanied the king on stage gets around 10—you might need it to hear the program. (7)

18 Not fashionable? Correct! Very much so! (8)

19 The First Lady, just before the light vanished. (3)

21 See 18 across

25 State shortly, when about to question a state others might be in. (6)

26 Article pictured by a prince. (6)

28 A cleat gets broken in the so-called dash. (5)

30 Wild fear in a way, if over 50. (5)

31 See 8

32 The way 8 goes on the mast, if someone important is late. (4)

33, and **23** across A small chess knight gets into trouble with Sartre, making a future story. (4,4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2941

R	E	T	U	R	N	A	D	D	R	E	S	S		
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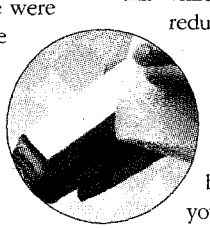

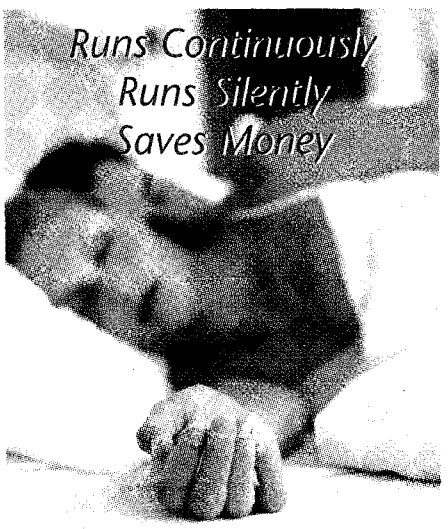

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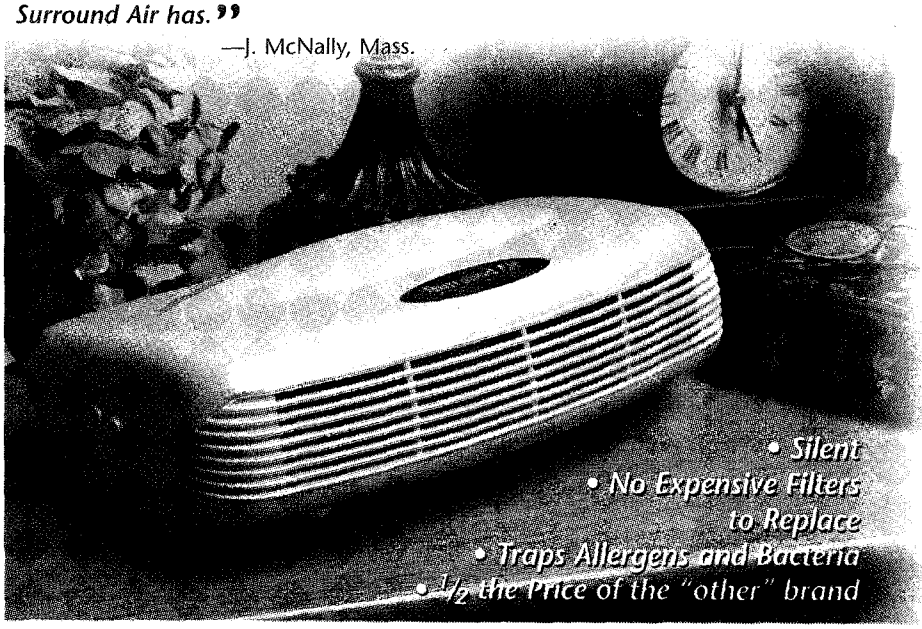

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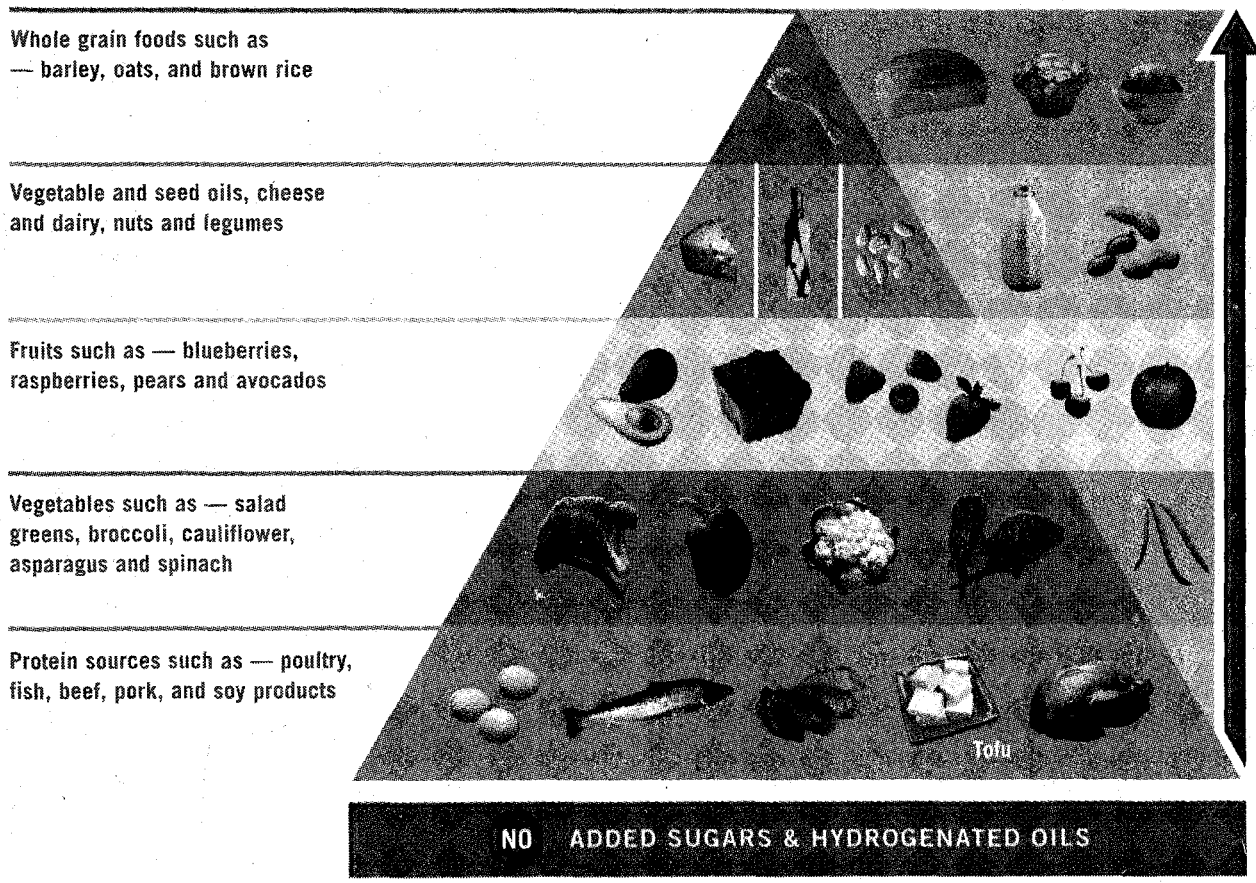
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3. Eat until you are satisfied:
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